



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

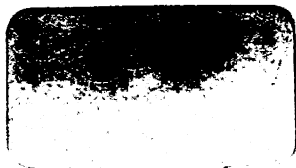
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



# *John-Jack*

Mary Louise Parmelee Peebles

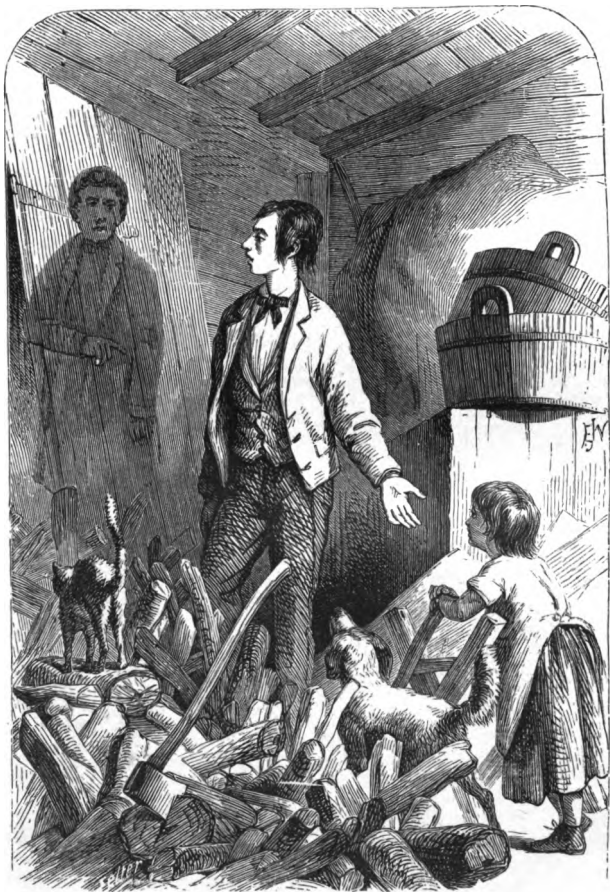
KJ 330











"You're very hard with me, John."—JOHN-JACK, PAGE 86.

THE  
MAGNET  
STORIES





THE MAGNET STORIES.

---

# JOHN-JACK.

BY  
LYNDE PALMER.

AUTHOR OF  
"DRIFTING AND STEERING;" "ONE DAY'S WEAVING;"  
"ARCHIE'S SHADOW," ETC.

---

TROY, N. Y.  
H. B. NIMS & COMPANY.  
1885.

KD 330

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
GIFT OF  
ALBERT ARNOLD SPRAGUE

May 9, 1940

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1888, by  
MOORE & NIMS,  
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the  
Northern District of New York.

## P R E F A C E .

---

A farmer walks through his fields, and rejoices to see the seed springing up on every side. "This is wheat," he says. "This is rye; this is corn." But there are yet only a few green tufts, which a child might mistake for weeds.

An angel looks over the field of the world, and sees, down in some heart, the small beginning of a wonderful new life. "This," says he, "is a *prince*—a king, a priest unto God!" And there is great rejoicing in heaven, while mortals may yet be unconscious of any change.

But when the farmer says, "this is corn," it is not yet corn. He rejoices because it is the right kind of *blade*, which, experience has taught him, will lead to the ear, then to the full corn in the ear.

When the angel says, "This is a prince," he does not yet see the prince, but only the small beginning of that mysterious life, which must develop into the grand measure of stature which distinguishes the sons of God.

But what if the farmer and the angel, returning at the harvest season, should find this life still in the feeble, worthless blade? The value, in both cases, consisted only in the *promise*.

The following pages record the struggles of two or three young people, who were afraid to rest satisfied with the simple birth of the new life, but who tried very earnestly to have it grow. It (the new life) had many enemies anxious

to dwarf its growth, or even to kill it outright, but among them all, they found that the one most to be feared was a small unruly member that it met in what should have been, the house of its friends. They also discovered that victory over this powerful enemy is not gained in *one* battle, no matter how sharp and determined. It is a life-long struggle. Conquering the *tongue* is one of the last, the highest attainments of Christian grace.

This they might already have learned from the Book of Books.

"If any man" (or boy, or girl) "offend not in *word*, the same is a *perfect* man" (or boy, or girl).

And nobody has ever yet seen that man, or boy, or girl.

# CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER I.		Page.
MILLBURGH NOTES.....		9
CHAPTER II.		
PICKPOCKETS .....		24
CHAPTER III.		
JOHN-JACK.....		35
CHAPTER IV.		
CHRISTIE .....		47
CHAPTER V.		
THE INVENTOR'S PLAN .....		55
CHAPTER VI.		
TRYING IT .....		70
CHAPTER VII.		
LU'S BROTHER .....		91
CHAPTER VIII.		
THE THREE BLACKING-BOTTLES .....		107
CHAPTER IX.		
CHRISTIE'S JOHN .....		123

CHAPTER X.		Page.
OPIATES .....		132
CHAPTER XI.		
A GREAT MATTER .....		154
CHAPTER XII.		
JOHN CREEPS .....		172
CHAPTER XIII.		
JOHN'S CHOICE .....		190
CHAPTER XIV.		
CHRISTIE REVIVES .....		213
CHAPTER XV.		
JOHN WALKS .....		233
CHAPTER XVI.		
JOHN TALKS .....		255
CHAPTER XVII.		
THE CROSS OF THE LEGION OF HONOR .....		273
CHAPTER XVIII.		
THE FEET OF CLAY .....		286
CHAPTER XIX.		
JOHN-CHRISTIE'S EARNINGS .....		296
CHAPTER XX.		
JOHN-JACK'S LAST CONFLICT .....		307

# THE MAGNET STORIES.

BY LYNDE PALMER.

---

1. DRIFTING AND STEERING.
2. ONE DAY'S WEAVING.
3. ARCHIE'S SHADOW.
4. JOHN-JACK.

(vii)



# JOHN-JACK.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### MILLBURGH NOTES.



OUTSIDE, it had been dark an hour or more. Inside, it was just as bright as gas-light, and fire-light, and the red ribbons on Mrs. Crum's best cap could make it.

Not that Mrs. Crum was alone by any means. The old-fashioned, but pleasant parlors were filled to the very verge of discomfort; there was an appetizing odor in the air, of fresh biscuits and coffee, and any one in Millburgh could have told you with his eyes shut, that such a hum and clatter could proceed from no other body than the sewing society of Mr. Anthon's influential church, in the fullest session. It was a very bright, animated scene. In the most comfortable

corners, out of the way of draughts, sat the old ladies comparing their rheumatisms; low-spirited Aunt Hopper and Mrs. Lowood enlarging upon the fact that the "day was far spent," while cheerful Mrs. Crum gave hearty testimony, that she wouldn't have believed, if anybody had told her, that at evening-time it *could* be so light.

Then there were knots of married ladies exchanging views upon servants and the winter's sewing; and one mother was telling of some unfortunate little baby, who had nearly slipped away to heaven, and how ipecac and calomel had been sent after it, and overtaken it, and dragged it back, and how now it was set upon its poor little feet again, ready to battle with measles and mumps and whooping cough.

But nowhere was the chatter so lively and incessant, as in that attractive corner of the back parlor, whither had drifted all the happy, good-natured, careless *young* people. They had been talking since two in the afternoon; it was now nearly seven, and as Tom Hammond said, they had scarcely made a beginning. Just at this moment, Lu Davison, a girl with pretty blonde hair, an astonishing

chignon, and blue ribbons knotted at her throat, had thrown herself back despairingly.

"O, girls!" she exclaimed, in utter dismay, holding up her afternoon's work, two coarse unbleached halves, making another unhappy illustration of "matched and not mated."

Lu received an unanimous expression of sympathy, in the rather questionable shape of peals of laughter.

"And look at the seam Christie is taking," said Christina Winter, a tall girl, with scant eye-brows, and such small features they gave one the impression of some miscalculation on the part of Nature; as if, having begun much too liberally with the feet, she had been driven to great economy in the furnishing of nose and mouth.

"Pray, Christie," she continued, "which side of the *sewing* does the shirt lie? Poor Michael will be puzzled to take his choice."

Her cousin, Christie Hammond, the girl with the short scarlet sacque, dark eyes and straight eyebrows, hair that wouldn't stay behind her ears, and unfaithful hair-pins, always deserting at the beck of some mysterious, unseen magnet, — looked up impatiently.

"It will give him something to do, then.

I've always heard that the truest charity provides for the mind as well as the body. It will be a double pleasure in his life ; he can have it for a conundrum one day, and a very useful garment the next."

"That's true," laughed Lu. "But come, I'm tired, and we've all sewed enough. Let's all go out and sit on the stairs by ourselves, and have a good talk. Nobody will bother us there, you know, because all the old people are afraid of draughts. Besides, there comes Mr. Anthon, and, of course, I'm always glad to see him. *very* ; but after one asks how he is, and tells him, 'I'm pretty well, thank you,' what in the world is there to say next?"

"Yes, do let us go," seconded Christie, "for old Uncle Hopper has just arrived too, and it's going to be terribly stupid. Hurry!"

So the half finished pieces of work, with the blighted garment, and the conundrum, were hastily bequeathed to the piano pedals, while the merry party fluttered away, like a company of parrots, to their different perches on the stairs.

"Now we'll all have to move again," laughed Christie, just as they were comfortably set-

tled, "here comes Nancy to take baby up to bed."

"O, *must* the dear baby go?" cried Lu, in a tone of such regret, as she kissed him rapturously. "Did you ever see, girls, such a beautiful, charming, lovely little creature!"

"He *is* a dear little fellow," assented gratified Christie.

But Lu had already turned to Belle Houghton, the girl in a silk dress, with gold bands at her wrists.

"Did you *ever* see such a pug nose?" she whispered, "and not a spear of hair on his head. It's well he is gone. If I had to look at him another minute, I think I should faint."

"What a humbug you are, Lu!" cried Belle; but she laughed.

A very pleasing diversion now occurred in the shape of Bridget with sandwiches and coffee; and the chatter grew livelier than ever, with cheerful accompaniment of rattling spoons.

"Has any one a real good piece of gossip to tell?" asked Lu Davison, settling herself. "We are all so comfortable now."

A little murmur of reproof arose, but it was only a murmur.

"Yes," assented Christie, "that would be delightful, I don't know anything that makes a biscuit relish more, than to take a bite out of some one's reputation, every alternate mouthful."

"Perhaps you mistake that for satire," said Lu, composedly, "but you know, Christie, you do love to talk as well as any one."

"Better," said Christie, frankly. "I believe it would kill me if I couldn't. Why even Job said, 'If I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.' Now if that patientest creature said that, how do you suppose *I* feel?"

The girls all laughed, for Christie was a favorite.

"Well, if one only says good things," began Belle Houghton.

"But one doesn't want to say 'good things,' because they are interesting; nobody wants to hear them."

"Oh! Oh!" began the girls, in indignant chorus.

"For instance," persisted Christie, "If I should say, 'what a very lovely woman that young Mrs. Steele is, and did you ever notice how fresh and pretty she looks when she smiles,' you would all be dreadfully bored.

But if I should say, 'girls you know that Mrs. Steele, who is always smiling, and thinks she is so fascinating, well, every one of those beautiful white teeth, she is so fond of showing, is *false*.' Why then, of course, you would be shocked, but — just a little pleased too. At least *I* should. It never seemed quite just, that she should have a nicer smile than the rest of us, and this, some way, seems to make it a little nearer right."

"That is too bad, Christie, I am sure I love to hear any one praised," said Lu Davison.

"Christie is very hasty in her judgments," said Christina Winter, coldly. "I thought I saw you in church, last night," she added.

"You were quite right," said Christie, sitting up, as if she had received challenge to combat, and must buckle on her armor.

"What did you think of Mr. Anthon's remarks on the law of *love*?"

"Thought them very sound till I came to put them in practice, and then found they wouldn't work."

"Why?" laughed Lu; for Christie was getting into one of her excited, reckless moods when the girls thought it great fun to

draw her on ; she didn't, in the least, care what she said..

"Well, just after Mr. Anthon spoke, and I was feeling very kindly towards everybody, and, to tell the truth, a little sleepy too, who should get up but Uncle Hopper."

"Take care !" said Christina, warningly.

"He is no relation of ours," returned Christie. "I don't think we need be so over sensitive about our great aunt's husband. So girls," she continued, "he began to speak, and you know he's good for twenty minutes, any time, and is just about as lively and interesting as the big wheel up in Mr. Houghton's mill."

This most self-evident proposition, passed without challenge, and Christie continued,

"I thought this law about loving one another, and loving the brethren, quite beautiful, while Mr. Anthon was speaking so — not to run any risk of breaking it — I thought about my new poplin, the first five minutes of Uncle Hopper, and whether I would have it cut square-neck."

"O, Christie !" exclaimed Lu, in horror.

"I wouldn't tell of it, if I did," added Christina.

"No, I see you wouldn't," said Christie, pointedly, "but I'm not afraid to tell the truth. Perhaps it was very wrong, but I don't believe a person in the house felt kinder towards him than I did, at the end of that time. It was so funny to look at them all. Mrs. Steele wasn't smiling then, no, not the least in the world; her eye-brows had gone up 'most out of sight. And Mr. Greyson—I half believe in Mr. Greyson—looked very patient, that's a fact, but I give you my word for it, not the least *affectionate*. Then Mrs. Crum got very devotional, and put down her head. I was glad of that. I do hope she had a good nap, she's such a dear old soul."

"And that passed about five minutes more, I suppose," said Lu, as Christie stopped for breath.

"Yes; and then I began to be a little discouraged, because he looked exactly as he did when he began, and the words came out just the same, and there was no earthly reason why he shouldn't go on forever. O, dear! twenty minutes is a great while to love Uncle Hopper. I think I broke down about the thirteenth or fourteenth, though that was holding out longer than most of them."

"Look out, Christie," whispered Lu. "Here comes your brother Tom."

But the girls were all laughing, and nothing could stop Christie now.

"You see what finished me — the last hair that broke the camel's back, — by camel, my brethren, please understand the 'law of love,' — was the thought that he would probably be spared to us a great many years. Of course he must go to heaven when he dies, and how could there ever be any hurry —"

"Has anybody an extinguisher?" cried Tom. "Put her right out! Here's some of that dangerous 'little fire' —"

"No, there isn't," said Christie. "I was only showing how much better I kept the law of love, than most people. Indeed now I think of it, I don't know that I have broken it at all with regard to Uncle Hopper. Don't 'loving others' mean doing for your neighbor just as you would for yourself? Well, if I were as stupid as he is, I shouldn't lose a minute, but go straight and hang myself; and there are very few church-nights when I wouldn't cheerfully do as much for *him*."

"Is that the way you girls talk?" said Tom, as they all laughed again. "Well, I shall be

very careful not to speak when any of *you* are out."

This sobered Christie a little. Tom had been having some very serious thoughts lately, which he had confided to her; and although she did not know how to help him, she had never meant to be a stumbling-block in his way.

"Girls," said Belle Houghton, by way of filling an embarrassing pause, "*did* you see Mrs. Cronin come into church last Sunday with that wretched old shawl pinned up like a burnous, and a great big handkerchief, — or was it a sheet? — tied around her neck?"

"It is so strange," said Tom, "that she shouldn't know how much better she'd look in a velvet cloak, and lace collar. Why don't some of you tell her?"

"Tell her!" cried Christie, "why she's as poor as —" and then they all saw what Tom meant.

Belle colored a little, feeling that she had made a mistake. Seen in this light, her own very elegant appearance was not such an undoubted proof of superiority as she could have wished.

"Do go away, Tom," cried Christie, "boys are so stupid."

"Can't be denied," said Tom, mournfully. "But don't you think I could learn a little something if I stayed? Your very name, *girl*, being a contraction of *garrulous*, you know, proves that you must be so superior and gifted in conversation. It is rather cruel to deprive me of such advantages."

"How clever your brother is?" said Lu to Christie in a very audible aside.

"He knows it, though, doesn't he!" she whispered to her left-hand neighbor, Christina Winter. "Isn't he terribly conceited?"

"He wouldn't be a Hammond, if he wasn't," she returned. "I must say that, if they *are* my cousins."

"Why, there's Allan Greyson, going across the front parlor," said Lu. "I didn't see him come in, did you?"

"O girls!" said Christina Winter, in a very low tone. "Did you ever hear that queer story about him? They say that,—Tom, there's Aunt Hammond beckoning for you, wants you to hand the cake or something,—now promise me, first, that you'll never tell," she continued, when Tom was at a safe dis-

tance, "but then I know you wont. They say that just before he came to Millburgh, — when he was living alone with his mother, — the house was entered one night by burglars: and his mother was gagged, and tied in a chair so the cords cut into her wrists, and was beaten too, when she tried to get away! and *he* was just in the next room, and so frightened that he never stirred to help her."

"I'll never believe it," said Christie, warmly, "unless it was years and years ago, when he was a baby."

"He couldn't have been such a very small baby," said Christina, "for it happened just ten years ago, and he must have been sixteen years old, at least. I know it is all so, because, when I was in the city last week, I met a lady from the very place where he lived, and she told me. There can't be any mistake."

"It doesn't seem a bit like him," mused Christie, with a regretful look. "It is such horrid meanness to be a coward."

"Is his mother living yet?" asked Belle.

"O, no, it killed her, of course," said Christina, complacently. "Now I would

never tell you this if it were mere gossip. No one abhors gossip more than I do. But this is *truth*; and I can't help thinking of it sometimes, when he is talking so grandly in the meetings, about *courage*, and standing up for the right. You have always thought him very wonderful, Christie, but you know the golden shield had two sides. I wonder how he would act, if he knew we had all heard the story? It would take a good deal of courage to face this."

"Face *what*?" cried a voice from the hall just under the stairs. "I believe in the girls, they are so brave; they are always going out to battle with some evil dragon. A most formidable set of warriors, too, for each one can say,

'My strength is as the strength of *ten*,  
Because my heart is pure.'

The speaker was the talented young Millburgh lawyer, a tall gentleman, with a broad forehead, gray, courageous eyes, and a mouth that might be a trifle too grave, when at rest, though just now very smiling and pleasant.

"Why, Mr. Greyson!" stammered Christina, while Belle gave a little stifled shriek, Lu grew

purple with suppressed laughter, and Christie, with scarlet cheeks, very industriously brushed the crumbs from her lap. "Why, Mr. Greyson, how you startled us! How long *have* you been there?"

## CHAPTER II.

### PICKPOCKETS.



OM, just then, came flying back, cake basket in hand.

“ Well, girls, am I too late for that story ? I know it was an extra one, because you were so affectionate, your heads could every one have been covered with a peck measure.”

Christie looked warningly and appealingly, but Tom continued, provokingly unconscious.

“ Come, Christina, I believe you were the orator. What was it now ? I hope you didn't outshine Christie.”

Mr. Greyson's keen eyes glanced from one to the other, and, trained by his profession to read blushes and shrugs, the lifting of eyebrows, and dropping of mouth corners,—he soon had a very fair comprehension of the situation. His quiet, peculiar smile greatly dis

turbed Christie, as she stole a glance at him from under her lashes. Had he heard? Was he angry? He had always been so kind to her, since the day he first came to study in Mr. Fellowes' office, and gave her a little candy bird as she was on her way to school.

"So you're not going to tell it; you are afraid," cried provoking Tom. "I didn't suppose it was so bad as that—a compound fracture of the ninth commandment, at the very least."

"It didn't come near the ninth commandment," said Christina, quickly. "Every word I spoke was *truth*."

"Perhaps it came nearer the eighth," said Mr. Greyson.

"Well, bad as we are, laughed Christie, "I don't think you can quite make us out thieves."

"I will present the case," said Mr. Greyson, "and you shall be the jury, and bring in whatever verdict you please."

"The jury's mind is open," said Lu, "and turns to you like a flower to the sun."

"Very well, I will then introduce the plaintiff. This poor fellow, gentlemen of the jury, announces that he had a very dear possession, something rather to be chosen than great riches,

something upon which his happiness and success for this life, in great measure depended something which he valued as he did life itself. And some one has been so cruel as to rob him of this treasure, although it was worth nothing the thief."

"A most incomprehensible thief. What did he steal?" said Lu, intentionally obtuse.

"A soul-overcoat—the garment which the poor fellow always wore out in the world, and which he had taken life-long pains to make respectable. Now he is naked and shivering, and is not received in decent society. Doesn't the jury consider this the worst kind of stealing?"

The jury consulted.

"Yes;" returned Christina, foreman *pro tem.*, "if the respectable overcoat covered a respectable soul. But if it was a mean, small soul, it had no right to its reputation, and the world ought to know it was a humbug."

"Even then," said Mr. Greyson, "if the jury will think a moment, I am sure they will hesitate. There is one thing, in my opinion, worse than a soul trying to keep up appearances on very small capital, and that is, one that has entirely given up all effort and re-

strait. I should not like to give one the least little push towards such desperation. If I met a poor man, in the street, with self-respect enough to blacken his boots and brush his coat, I would hardly have the heart to say, 'you know you are nothing but a beggar!' and then tear open his carefully buttoned coat, that all the crowd may see that his shirt is miserably soiled and torn."

"O, no!" cried Christie, impulsively. This was such a new way of looking at it.

"Then one mustn't tell the truth," said Christina, obstinately.

"When a person's character is in question, there is an old saying, 'The greater the truth the greater the slander.'"

"I've always heard that lawyers could prove black, white," said Christina, with a little uneasy laugh, "but this is the first time I ever suspected that truth and slander meant the same thing."

"Let me tell you a little story," said Mr. Greyson. "I once had a friend, we will call him Brown, — who, when he was very young, was led astray by bad companions, and committed such an offence against the laws of his country, that he was sentenced to prison for

two years. At the end of that time, he came out greatly changed in every respect, and with a most earnest resolve to lead a different life. He went to some far city of the West, where he was an entire stranger, and began life anew. After several years of most honest and patient struggle, he secured quite a little fortune, and, what he valued still more, the respect and confidence of his fellow men. He married, had two or three children, was happy, and honored.

“But one day, a man from his native village, — call him Smith, — also came to settle in this Western city. Smith was not an unkind man, at least not malicious; but he began to say to one and another, ‘O, you have Brown here. Is he perfectly reliable now? can you trust him? you know, of course, about that little affair. No? Well, I never meant to mention it — don’t want to harm the man, *but* —’ and then would follow the whole story.

“Very soon poor Brown began to notice a certain want of cordiality; business friends hesitated and refused to accommodate him, or trust him without insulting precautions. Wife and children were neglected more and more; scarcely a day passed without some slight

and mortification, and finally the change became so cruel and marked, that he could no longer mistake its meaning. In the most utter despair he sold out everything — his business, his pleasant home — at the greatest sacrifice, and forever left the place where he had spent so many happy years. It was like Adam leaving Paradise. I shall never forget how crushed and heart-broken he looked as I bade him good-by in the depot. ‘I shall never try the experiment again,’ he said. ‘Some one would track me, I have but one hope. Other fathers want to live for their children, the best thing I can do for mine, is to *die*.’

The girls looked very sober.

“Well, Miss Christina, hadn’t poor Brown an undoubted right to this reputation, this overcoat, woven by so many years of patient, painful labor?”

“Yes, indeed,” cried Christie, warmly, “Smith was the most cruel thief in the world to rob him of it.”

“But Smith told the *truth*.”

Christina twisted her rings in silence; while Tom announced, with prophetic eye, that victory was steadily flapping towards a perch on the Greyson banners.

"Only one thing more," laughed Mr. Grey son. "I did not mean to preach a sermon, but I want you to understand — I want to tell you, that *slander*, in its fullest sense, means anything that lessens the reputation of another without good cause, whether *true* or not. And, of course, in the case I have given, you can see that a falsehood which could have been refuted, would have been much less of an injury than this crushing truth which could not be denied. I am not sure but Smith broke the sixth commandment as well as the eighth. Brown has been failing ever since. I think he received his death-blow. Would any one like to have been in the place of the truthful Mr. Smith?"

"Of course not," said Lu, pouting. "But what is the use of being so dreadfully serious. That was a very unusual case, and we girls are very different from your meddlesome, malicious Smith —"

"There!" interrupted Christie, "if that Mrs. Steele isn't going to sing! I do wish some one would tell her that she has a voice just like a frog."

"I will," cried that obliging Tom, starting up with alacrity.

Christie caught him by the neck-tie, and brought him back properly choked and humiliated.

"As I was saying," continued Lu, "we girls only want a little fun without the least evil intentions in the world. We don't mean to hurt anybody; but what *would* life be without a secret now and then?"

A murmur of consternation arose at the bare thought of such a hopeless desert.

"But I'm sure," finished Lu, "nobody could ever accuse us of anything very bad."

"No indeed," cried the depraved Tom, "they would never steal a whole overcoat; they would only pick the pockets!"

There was a great storm of indignation.

"I've had an instinct of danger for some time," laughed Mr. Greyson, moving away. "Take care of me, Tom, I leave you on guard — my pockets are very easily picked."

The girls looked at each other uneasily.

"All good people are sure to grow queer and narrow," said Lu, oracularly, looking after him. "As though going in the narrow way gave them such a squeeze. It's a pity. Mr. Greyson must have been rather nice when he was young."

"He isn't Methuselah yet," suggested Tom.

"No; but he has some stupid *old* notions, not a bit liberal you know. All good people are just alike; they're all like the toad in the well, who saw only his own little patch of blue, and took it for the whole sky."

"Another life would be blighted, if Grey son heard that," said Tom, despondently. "I know he'd never rally."

Tom's remark was considered beneath notice.

"Now he is talking to Mrs. Fellowes," said Christina Winter. "I wonder what he finds interesting in that dowdy, shabby creature. Her own cook dresses more like a lady than she does. It looks so mean to be so pinching and saving, when there is no need of it. Her husband is making a mint of money."

"Isn't she delicious though," said Lu, "when she comes into church with her bonnet all on one side? They say Mr. Fellowes climbs the bed-post, and throws it at her head, and she walks off with it just as it happens to strike."

"I don't think she is half so comical as her brother, Mr. Barrett," giggled Christie.

"Whenever he preaches, he gets so red in the face, and hangs over the pulpit, clawing away so helplessly, that I can't think of anything but a big lobster just being dropped into the pot."

"You're a perfectly hopeless set," cried the indignant Tom. "If Greyson only knew this was all the good —"

"He needn't have been so grand and superior," pouted Christie, whose pride was a little hurt.

"He wasn't a bit, returned Tom. "Any one could see that he didn't enjoy making himself disagreeable to you girls, but when you brought him to the point, he wouldn't go back on his principles. I like his courage."

"Courage!" began Christina Winter, pointedly, and then paused. But every girl finished the sentence in her own mind.

"Yes," thought they, with a pleasant sense of relief, "What right has he to be picking away at our little 'motes,' when he has such an ugly 'beam' of his own."

So the good lesson failed of its effect. So Christina Winter robbed Mr. Greyson of his influence.

"I don't know what you girls are up to

now," said the puzzled Tom, looking from one to another. "But I am going after Mr. Anthon, to ask him if he knows what very distinguished people we have here to-night. Miss Lu Davison, M. P., Miss Christie Hammond M. P. There, don't be frightened. He won't guess, and I'll *never* tell that it meant Millburgh Pickpockets."

## CHAPTER III.

JOHN-JACK.



OW we will have a few minutes of peace, I hope," said Christie, as Tom sauntered away. "O, Dump, pray don't try to squeeze in here."

The intruder, who with a look of radiant satisfaction had been hoping to slip unnoticed to a seat in this gay society, was the very stout little six year old Nellie Hammond, commonly known in the family as "Dumpling," or "Dump;" a title illustrative of the fact that her breadth and height were about equal.

"Isn't it refreshing to see such a perfect picture of health? The dear little chub!" said Lu, admiringly; while with the next breath she whispered to Belle. "Did you *ever* see such a figure! Bolster tied in the middle! Almost a deformity, don't you think so?"

"Come, run away, that's a good girl," said Christie, coaxingly. "You always fidget so. Besides," she lowered her voice, "I thought you promised to stay with John-Jack. Where is he?"

Dump gave a quick little glance at the head of the stairs. Christie followed it apprehensively. Yes; there in the half-light, hiding behind the old-fashioned clock, her experienced eye surely detected the long, lank figure of John-Jack. It was very provoking, for he had promised solemnly to stay in the kitchen, on condition that she would make him a neck-tie out of her own scarlet ribbon. She sprang up the stairs.

"There, Jack," she whispered, hastily, "you've broken your word! you've lost the neck-tie. That is," she added, nervously, for John-Jack, broad shouldered, a head taller than Christie, was beginning to sob aloud, "unless you go right away, and don't come in again till they are all gone."

She laid energetic little hands upon him, and hurried him, unresisting, down the back stairs, he had but lately ascended.

"I didn't mean to be so bad, cousin," he began. "John said 'don't go,' all the time; but

then *Jack* said nobody would see. You will never forgive *Jack* ? ” he asked, lifting his great, strange eyes.

Christse’s heart was not made of stone.

“ Yes, I’ll forgive you,” she said, hastily, “ if you’ll only be good now.” She was in a great hurry to get back to those gay girls. “ And *Bridget*, you must tell me if he stirs out of this corner.”

“ Will you shake hands with me, cousin ? ” asked *John-Jack*, timidly, as she turned away.

“ No,” cried *Christie*, shortly, with a little look of disgust. She was exceedingly fastidious. “ Your hands are not clean enough ; they are horrid. Look ! ” And by the side of his large dingy hands, with long, uncared for nails, she laid her own, so white and smooth, so scrupulously clean.

*John-Jack* gave a little cry, as if something hurt him, and dropping his head, said not another word.

“ Be sure and give him plenty of biscuits and coffee, *Bridget*,” said *Christie*, looking back, with a little twinge of remorse. And then, pretty and smiling, she appeared again at the head of the stairs, with a sigh of relief that this peril was over.

But she was mistaken.

"Was that your poor cousin?" asked Christina Winter, in a pitying tone.

"He is not *my* cousin, you know," said Christie, hastily, "he is only mamma's second cousin."

"Is he?" cried Lu, opening her eyes. "I didn't suppose he was any relation. I thought he was a boy your father had taken to take care of the cow, and so on."

"Well, so he is," said Christie, resigning herself. "We've just taken him out of charity. His father and mother died when he was a baby, and there was only some old woman to see to him; and now *she* had to die, and mother *would* have him brought here. I don't believe there was ever any one so good as mother," finished Christie, warming up a little.

"How old is he?" asked Belle Houghton.

Christie made a little impatient gesture. Belle was the girl with the richest father in Millburgh. The Houghtons had never been guilty of the crime of having poor relations. Christie had hoped she was not listening.

"About eighteen," she answered, constrainedly.

"Just the right age," said Belle. "Why didn't you bring him in and introduce him?"

"It wouldn't do you any good;" said Christina Winter, with a little provoking laugh; "he is already Christie's devoted admirer."

Christie flushed angrily, but otherwise, she entirely ignored her cousin's speech.

"O, you girls wouldn't care for him," she answered. "He isn't quite like other people; he is — well, eccentric."

"Why not tell the truth?" said Christina, quietly. "He is an idiot."

"Not at all," cried Christie, vehemently "He was as bright as anybody when he was born, but —"

"There, don't be angry," interrupted Christina. "It is very hard to have such a person in the family, and you take it better than I should. If he were *my* cousin, I don't believe I would be half so patient."

This apparent generosity on Christina's part, had its root in an anxiety that the girls should remember that her mother was sister to Christie's *father*. Consequently her blood was untainted; she had not a drop in common with the unfortunate John-Jack.

Christie's indignant eyes showed that she

felt the very reverse of gratitude for this kind speech.

"An idiot!" pursued Belle, with some curiosity. "What is he like? I never saw an idiot in my life. Was there ever another case in the family?"

"Not in mine," returned Christie, haughtily, while she whispered to Lu, with very hot cheeks, "She could get a sufficiently good idea of one, without going out of her own."

Lu laughed. "Yes, Belle's brother has just enough mind to embarrass his friends. If he had the least bit less, they could have settled him comfortably in an asylum. As it is—" Lu held up her hands in utter inability to express the trouble and expense of providing him with grown-up rattles.

"What's up now?" asked Tom, back from a tour of thanking Mrs. Steele, picking up Mrs. Crum's knitting, and giving his mother's hand an affectionate squeeze. "You look very unhappy. Haven't been trying each other's pockets? Honor among thieves, you know."

"They're telling about John-Jack," said little Dump.

"Might have been a worse subject. Where

is he, Christie? The girls ought to see him. He is such an original."

"O, Tom, you know he isn't at all right,"—began Christie, uneasily. "It wouldn't do."

"Why not? I'm not at all sure but he knows more than most of us. Did you tell them about that fall he had, Kriss? A terrible fall that dislocated something or other up in his head, and ever since that his mind sees *double*—or that's as near as *I* can come to it. He thinks there's two of him, a good one that he calls John, and a bad one he calls Jack, and it is so comical sometimes to hear them argue together. John has so much trouble with Jack, and Jack is in such hopeless grief when John is angry with him. And then once in a while, he gets in a great tangle, and can't tell which is which. That is queerest of all." Tom laughed.

"Why's he's crazy!" said Belle Houghton, looking apprehensively up the stairs. "Is he ever dangerous?"

"Dangerous! pshaw!" cried Tom, in great disgust. "Harmless as a kitten. Wait! I'll go and find him."

"Where has Christina gone?" asked Lu, suddenly missing her.

"Christina? Oh!" said Christie, in a tone indicative of anything but pleasure, quite diverted from John-Jack to a new source of uneasiness. Her mother had particularly requested her to show Aunt Hopper some attention, and she had forgotten all about it. But there was Christina settling a sofa-cushion behind her back, bringing her a footstool, and pretending to be perfectly absorbed in the torrent of words, which the old lady was pouring forth, with her forehead in a wilderness of wrinkles. "Aunt Hopper couldn't possibly be so animated on any other subject than herself," thought Christie. "She is telling now all about her head and her stomach and her liver. O dear, dear, I have heard it a thousand times, and so has Christina. She hates it just as much as I do, but she's so politic —"

"How she does toady your Aunt Hopper!" said Lu, who was very quick to understand an unworthy thought.

"Yes," said Christie, quite off her guard. "She knows what she is about. It is worth fifty cents, to hand Aunt Hopper her snuff-box, and a dollar to pick up her handkerchief."

"I suppose she's *very* rich," said Lu, "you were both named after her, weren't you?"

"Yes, horrid old name, isn't it? But father would do it. They had had some kind of a quarrel, and this half way made it up: she was quite pleased about it."

"I'm sure I shouldn't mind it," said Lu, "if I were going to have half her fortune. I've always heard she promised to divide it between you."

"O, that was before she married the second time. Maybe she has changed her mind now. At least I'm afraid I won't get much. I've had a terrible fall out of favor lately."

"She is very hard to please, isn't she?" said Lu.

Christie shrugged her shoulders. "Next to impossible. And she does say the sharpest, ugliest things! And then I can't go crawling back like *some* people, and lick her hand like a little whipped spaniel. Now Lu, of course you'll never mention a word of this," said Christie, suddenly awaking to a sense of her imprudence.

"Oh, never!" cried Lu, who at the present time was Christie's dearest, most intimate friend. "Come, Christie, let's go play a game

of croquet, and Christina will join us in two minutes."

Somehow, although Christina Hammond was always called "Christie," or "Kriss," nobody ever thought of shortening Christina Winter's name.

---

The evening was over. Mrs. Hammond was busy with her silver and china, while Tom and Christie were setting back tables and chairs.

"Tom," said Christie, suddenly, pausing with a pile of music books in her hand, "There is somebody I don't believe I can ever like so well again in all my life! I have heard something horrid, to-night, about Allan Greyson."

"Caught, Christie!" laughed Tom. And, looking up, she saw Mr. Greyson himself standing in the hall; he had been detained by her father on some matter of business; they had just come down the stairs together.

There could be no question as to his having heard, this time, although he stood so cool and quiet, with that same provoking little shadow of a smile.

"Make her tell it, Mr. Greyson," cried Tom, "make her tell it. And if it's a libel, you can

take the persons up, and make them pay heavy damages."

"I will *never* tell who said it," said Christie, magnificently, hoping that Mr. Greyson would notice that she had a high sense of honor. But he did not appear to hear her. He only turned to Tom, quoting a Turkish proverb.

"'He who stops to throw stones at all the dogs who bark at him, will never reach his journey's end.' Good night." And he was gone.

Christie was very hot and uncomfortable, and Tom was magnanimous enough to spare her any farther comment.

"I wonder what did get into John-Jack!" he said by way of changing the subject. "He spent two hours, at the very least, trying to make himself elegant, for this grand occasion. Dump tied his bow, and I helped him with his hair; he was so excited and happy, poor fellow, only he was afraid *you* wouldn't think he looked nice enough; he asked us over and over about it. And there, after all that fuss, I found him out by the kitchen fire, the perfect image of despair; and nothing I could say or do would persuade him to come in the room a single minute. I suppose he got nervous about

it. It was very selfish in me not to think of him earlier."

Christie murmured something very indistinctly, and ran out in the kitchen.

"Bridget, where is John-Jack?"

"Gone to bed, Miss Christie, it might be an hour ago."

"Did you give him plenty of everything nice to eat?" she asked, anxiously.

"I'm thinking the poor innocent wasn't well," said Bridget. "He turned like from everything: he took neither bite nor sup."

## CHAPTER IV.

### CHRISTIE.



CHRISTIE, sitting at work, with her mother, the next morning, heaved a long sigh.

"I didn't enjoy myself at all, last evening," she said.

"That is encouraging," said her mother quietly. "I was afraid you *did*."

"It seems hard that a mother should take pleasure in a child's-unhappiness," pouted Christie, although she knew there was always a meaning under these queer speeches.

"Last evening was not spent right," continued her mother, "and now that you see how little happiness has come from such a course of conduct, I hope you will be willing to try a more excellent way."

"You mean Aunt Hopper," said Christie, gloomily. "Now mother I did mean to do everything right, but before I dreamed of  
(47)

such a thing, the evening was all gone. I was so frightened when I saw her going up stairs, I ran to help her with her cloak, but she just said, like an icicle, 'O, don't trouble yourself, I beg,' and then she called Christina. Wasn't that hateful? She does snub me so."

"It was quite natural, I think, when you hadn't spoken to her all the evening, and Christina had been so thoughtful and kind."

"Kind! If you only knew, mother, how Christina talks about her behind her back, and then makes Aunt Hopper think she just worships her. Now mother, whatever my faults are, you know I cannot be double-faced, and I cannot run after Aunt Hopper, with that miserable cringing and fawning that somebody has called, 'the gratitude for favors about to be received.' It makes me sick. If there only could be a fair and square bargain! I'd say 'Aunt Hopper, if you'll only leave me a few thousand dollars, I'll look for your spectacles, carry your foot-stools, laugh at every joke you make, and cry over your dyspepsia and neuralgia, as long as you live.' I wonder why people can't be honest, and make some such sensible little arrangements. I'd keep up my part of the bargain honorably, and it

would be such a relief. But if there is to be any crawling, Christina must do it. I can't sell myself for a little money. She is welcome to it all."

"It is very well to despise money, if you are strong enough to be happy without it," said her mother. "This you cannot tell till you are tried, and I don't know how soon that may be."

Christie looked up questioning and alarmed.

"Nothing very new, dear ; but you know your father's salary at the bank is not very large, and we have very little besides. The children are all growing older ; our expenses are constantly increasing. Tom must be kept at college, and *you* have a great many more wants than you had a year ago. I'm afraid the time may come when even my high-minded Christie wouldn't in the least despise a small portion of Aunt Hopper's fortune. And if she forfeits it, she will then have time to decide whether the loss was owing to her nobility of character, or to selfishness, and an unbridled tongue."

"You are not a bit afraid of me, are you, mother ?" said Christie, smiling faintly, "you say just what you think. I don't want to be

selfish. If I thought it was only that. But mother you haven't the least idea how hard it is to stay with Aunt Hopper ; she is so dismal, and seems so sorry for herself all the time, that she's just ready to burst out crying ; and a girl like me, you know, always wants to be laughing."

"Just what would do Aunt Hopper good. 'If God has given you strings of joy and mirth, He meant you to play upon them for those who hear but little music.'"

"I wonder if He did," mused Christie, sitting very still for a long time.

"Was there anything more, mother?" she asked at last.

"Yes, I was very much disappointed in another matter. I always hoped I should have brave, courageous children. Poor John-Jack —"

"Don't say another word, mother," cried Christie. "I confess, it does look very cowardly and mean. I don't wonder you are discouraged. If there only was something you could see to like in me? Isn't there a bright spot anywhere?"

Her mother smiled a little, and Christie, taking courage, hastened on.

"I should think you'd be a little proud, mother, to have me get on so at school. Mr. Carter tells me I am his best scholar, and I know I am. He wants me to be thinking already about my composition at the end of the quarter, for he says, I have unusual talents, and I must get up something that will be an honor to him and the school. Every one of the girls was provoked; for though I wouldn't tell them what he said, they couldn't help guessing what made me look so pleased. Now aren't you very glad to have me what Mr. Carter calls 'a superior girl?' Do speak, mother; or don't you believe it is true?"

"Yes," she said slowly, "but that is what almost frightened me, last night."

"When?"

"When you sat on the stairs, talking so very fast, and all the girls listening and laughing."

"There, mother! Did you hear that about Uncle Hopper?" Christie dropped her work in perfect despair.

"No, I didn't hear a word," returned her mother, "but this is what you reminded me of — a quick, energetic, powerful little steam-tug, drawing a train of barges, canal-boats and rafts after it."

"Why, mother, I never knew you to be so complimentary," cried Christie.

"Wait, till I have finished. I didn't say the canal-boats might not have a much more valuable freight than the tug, although not such a head of steam. But this is the thought I want to express; the little steam-tug had a great deal of responsibility, so much so that I would almost have preferred to be one of the blunt-headed barges. A very small helm was guiding the steamer, turning it whithersoever the governor listed. It might steer towards some quiet, safe haven, or go dashing down some dangerous rapids. But it would not go alone, all the poor, unconscious boats in tow, would have to follow. Do you see, my dear, busy little steam-tug? What kind of a governor sat at that very small helm, and where did you steer with all that precious freight? I hope there will never be a wreck for which Christie is to blame."

"There, mother, when you talk like that, you make me perfectly miserable. It certainly does take all the pleasure out of being 'superior' for a while. One would almost rather be John-Jack, an 'innocent,' as Bridget calls him. It sounded so grand to hear Mr.

Carter talk about the *leading* minds of the age, but just in this light, it is frightful. What do you think I'd better do. I suppose you would like to have me join that society where they take the vow of perpetual silence."

"And be turned out the first half hour?" smiled her mother. "Besides, I don't see how that would mend matters much. The tongue is just as powerful for good as evil, and putting aside a valuable gift, without trying to use it, is rather an insult to the Giver, isn't it?"

Christie didn't answer, she was thinking again. Tom seemed to know how to manage *his* tongue. He wasn't a bit stupid; he said a great many capital things, and yet he never got into half the trouble she did. What was the secret? He had a better start in life, for *one* thing; he was born affectionate, and patient, and cheerful, while *she* came into the world selfish, quick-tempered, and restless, with spirits, like the tides, at perpetual ebb and flow. But she wouldn't suggest this to her mother for the world; she would be sure to agree with her.

"Then you don't think I ought to give up talking?" she said, at last.

"Of course not; only have the right governor at the helm."

"What governor?"

"Love."

"There it is again," said Christie.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE INVENTOR'S PLAN.



CHRISTIE began the day wrong. It was Sunday, and she was up too late for breakfast. It seemed hard that her mother should look so displeased when she had been having such a beautiful dream. To be sure she hadn't been as courageous as John-Jack, whom she had heard almost two hours ago, having one of those queer little conflicts with himself, in his room next to hers.

"Get up Jack," he had said.

"It's so cold, John. Just a minute longer."

"Get up this instant. Not another word!"

Very sternly the inexorable John had spoken, and she had heard poor Jack tumble out, with a heavy sigh, not daring to disobey. But just then she had slipped away in such a delicious dreamy haze. She had lately been reading a life of Mahomet, and now she imag-

ined herself one of the seventy thousand spirits that lie all mixed together in the great tank of light, and are born into separate angels, whenever the angel Gabriel passes by. It was so delightful to be beautiful and good, without any bother about it; and it wasn't at all pleasant to come to consciousness, and find herself only selfish, common-place Christie, with breakfast quite cold, and the first bells ringing for church. She had to do everything in such a hurry. She grew very nervous over her hair, and, not finding the ear-rings to wear with her corn-colored bow, she accused Dump of taking them, and scolded her till she cried. Then, to cap the climax, there wasn't a pin to be found upon her cushion, though that was nothing very new. John-Jack, overwhelmed with her despair, came running with some from her mother's room, which he laid softly before her.

"Couisin," said he, lingering, while she seized them without a word. "Are they any better? Could you shake 'em now?"

Christie turned impatiently. Jack, smiling complacently, was holding out his hands.

"O, how dreadful!" cried Christie, covering her eyes, with a gesture of utter disgust.

The great hands were the color of raw beef, the skin was off of almost every knuckle; they were bleeding a little.

"It makes me faint. Do go away, you horrid, horrid creature!"

Jack was gone before she had finished. She heard him in the hall, on his way to his room.

"I told you so, Jack, you're *horrid*!"

"But I tried, John," he returned, tremulously, "I tried; and you said—," the rest was lost.

"He's been washing his hands with Tom's sand-soap, ever since breakfast," announced Dump, simply, "said he didn't care how much it hurt, he meant to get 'em clean."

Altogether Christie was not at all in an enviable state of mind, when she at last found herself in the seat at church, warm and embarrassed with arriving too late. Mr. Anthon was quite in the middle of his sermon before she was sufficiently composed to give him a thought.

"On the same old subject," she said to herself, wearily, after listening a minute. But presently there was an illustration that interested her.

"Suppose," Mr. Anthon was saying, "some one, who had never seen a telescope, should suddenly stumble upon one in his garden, and fall to wondering what it was meant for. If he took it to pieces, part of it might make a very good roller for the walks, or the long tube might be used for a drain or sewer. But this doesn't quite suit him. With all these carefully adjusted glasses and screws, it must have been intended for some special and higher end. At last, he concludes to *look* through it, but, having pointed it to the ground, everything is in confusion and blur. He is quite at his wit's end, when the person who invented, and thoroughly understands it, comes to his assistance. He mounts it, points it right, and at midnight calls him to look. The man is quite beside himself with astonishment. The wonderful thing has caught the stars by their shining hair. It shows him the rings about Saturn, the volcanoes and gloomy caverns in the moon; it unravels the misty little webs of light, and shows him they are made of distant, glorious sun.

"But what should we think of this man, if after such a wonderful revelation, he should say, 'Sir, this is all very well; but still, in my opin-

on, it would make a far better roller, or sewer-pipe.' You would say, 'he has not common sense ; the man is crazy.'

"Let us now look together at another grand invention,—that beautiful, complicated thing called a human being. Study the wonderful structure of the body, the still more wonderful mind, hidden so mysteriously in the gray little brains, and you can't help seeing that this marvellous creature has innumerable sources of happiness, in short was undoubtedly created *for* happiness by some very benevolent Being. This is a pleasant thought ; you are quite willing to believe it. Each one says for himself, 'I am quite ready to carry out this kind intention by every means in my power.' You then try your very best to accomplish your own happiness, and are quite astonished to find that you do not succeed. On the contrary, you meet with trouble and disappointment on every side ; you are often miserable ; life seems to be an utter failure. But there is no reason for this discouragement. The Inventor of these wonderful machines must surely have left some directions as to the best way of accomplishing the end for which they were made. You examine into the matter, and

you find that to attain perfect happiness you have this rule :

“‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbor as thyself.’

“‘But I know better,’ says one. ‘It is a very tiresome thing to love God and your fellow-men. You will have to give to the poor, and visit the sick, and be patient and self-denying. Happy ? Absurd ! It is the life of a slave. I shall give myself up to gayety and feasting. I shall shut my eyes to all sorrow and suffering. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.’

“Very well. No one is forced to try the Inventor’s plan. These are very wonderful and complicated machines ; they may be used for a great many different ends. You may choose the lowest, if you please,—be the sewer if it satisfies you. But it is a fearful degradation.

“Another one says, ‘I am quite sure money will make *me* happier than anything else. You need not come to me with your petitions and plans of benevolence. I shall not give a cent. I prefer to save my money, and put it out at

compound interest. It is delicious to see my fortune rolling up year after year. I intend to be the richest man of the age, before I die.'

"This is *his* plan, and he may be allowed to carry it out to perfect success. He may die the richest man of the century. And what then ?

"It is a strange fact that those who differ from the great Inventor, are not called crazy in *this* life. This is seen more clearly in the next.

"Perhaps some one is saying, 'Of course the Inventor knows what is *best* for us, but no words can prove that it is a pleasant thing to be always giving up self. You are not putting the matter fairly. The *happiness* must all come in the next world.'

"This is a mistake, I can prove it. When He who spake as the Father gave him commandment, was giving his last charges to his friends, He repeated this great law again and again, in every variety of form. Love, it was the burden of his theme ; that they might love the Father, love *Him*, love one another. He could not repeat it often enough. And, at last, He tells them the reason. 'These things have

I spoken unto you that *my joy* might remain in you.' He was so anxious that they should understand it, that they should see that in doing these things, joy should certainly remain with them, remain here on earth.

"But would this joy be satisfactory? What is this joy?

"The joy of Him, who is one with the Father, divine joy, God's own joy. Could there be anything better? Sharers in the happiness of God. What honor! What inexpressible joy!

"You 'do not understand it?' No, and you will not, until you have grace to make this highest choice. This is the peace that passeth all natural understanding. But even if you do not understand, how can you help believing — if you have reason — that the Inventor *must* know? Why must so many go groping and mourning all their days, over the so-called mystery of life? Ah, what trouble, what weariness, what bitter disappointment would be saved, if men would only accept the Inventor's plan."

Christie thought it over very busily. Was this indeed the great secret of life? Grasping this beautiful truth, would she indeed

find it the little key that would open the sweet gates of happiness, both in this world and that to come ?

When her wandering thoughts came-back, Mr. Anthon was saying —

“As the new life grows, we are conscious of new powers. We are becoming able—I speak reverently—to *appreciate* God. The time may even come when we cannot look at Him, cannot think of Him without an excitement, a sudden thrill of happiness, as when one looks for the first time upon the Alps, upon Mont Blanc or Niagara. We begin to understand why the angels veil their faces ; why there are always some spirits so lost in wonder and ecstasy that they rest not day and night, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy!’

‘How that bright chief angel stands,  
Apart from all his brother bands,  
Too glad for smiling, having bent  
In angelic wilderment  
O’er the depths of God, and brought  
Reeling thence, one only thought  
To fill his whole eternity.’

“It surely should not be such a strange, such a difficult thing to love this great God. But we, so weak, so helpless, so trivial, so fault-find-

ing, so utterly contemptible, can it be possible that He should love *us*?

"Yes, He has said so. But how much? Will he tolerate us upon the outskirts of heaven, His slaves, permitted at long intervals to kiss His feet? More than that.

"Hired servants, then, who may stand in the presence chamber, honored now and then with a smile?

"More than that.

"Friends, perhaps, admitted to His feasts, knowing what their Lord doeth, confidants of His grand purposes and designs?

"Yes, but more than *that*."

Mr. Anthon's voice faltered; he paused a moment. Then his plain face grew beautiful, as he finished simply:

"Behold what wonderful manner of love, that we should be called the *sons* of God!"

Excitable Christie was quite carried away with this climax. She put her head down, and cried; finding time, however, to wonder whether Christina Winter, and Lu Davidson—who sat just behind—were noticing how deeply she felt. Her doubts were soon solved, when church was over, and they came down the aisle together.

"Sleepy, weren't you?" said Christina.

"I noticed it before you put down your head."

"What of it?" said good-natured Lu, "I was too, a little."

Christie was on fire in a minute. "That is downright malicious, Christina, you know better, but you meant to have Mrs. Fellowes hear. How could I possibly be so stupid, while Mr. Anthon was saying such grand things!"

"Malicious!" repeated Christina. "I am glad the sermon has done you so much good."

"Stupid!" added Lu, "thank you for the compliment."

And so she had made them both angry. She walked on to join Tom, sadly pondering the great difference between preaching and practising. But she wanted to talk to somebody, and Tom always understood her, if he *was* a great tease sometimes. He looked sober enough to-day, as she linked her arm in his.

"O, Tom, wasn't that great?"

"Yes, it was," said Tom, *so* emphatically. "That was the kind of a sermon I like. No nonsense: all divided off clear and plain; any one could understand it. Mr. Anthon led you right on, you just climbed higher and higher. In fact, Christie," said he, a sudden

thought striking him, "it was a perfect *tree* of a sermon, in which every poor Zaccheus like me — of short, mental stature, you know —" Tom laughed — "could climb and see the Lord."

That was very good for Tom. Christie didn't want to be outdone. Besides she was quite conscious that Mr. Greyson was just behind with her father, and she was anxious that he should know she, also, had noble thoughts.

"Yes, Tom, I don't think I ever before *began* to realize the greatness of God. Why, when he was talking so beautifully about His glory, I was so excited, I thought I should be quite willing to be one of those angels in the old legend, who are born out of the river of fire under the throne, that only rise to say 'Praise God,' and then sink back into nothing. That would be happiness enough, wouldn't it, Tom?"

Tom looked perplexed; he took off his hat, and wiped his forehead. "Maybe it's very selfish, Christie, but that wouldn't be a bit satisfactory to *me*."

"Nor to me," said Mr. Greyson. And Christie knew by his tone, that he was laughing; so she had only made herself ridiculous.

"He might have taken my part, though," she thought, with heightened color, "he always used, no matter how absurd I was. But now he wants to revenge himself for that night at the sewing-society."

It was a peculiar gift of Christie's that she never had the least difficulty in reading the most hidden motives of her friends.

When they reached home, Tom hastened to hide himself in his room, and was invisible till tea-time. Then he emerged very quiet, so unlike his usual gay, boisterous self, that Christie watched him with astonishment. He sat with his hands over his eyes during the usual twilight singing, and quite broke down in his favorite chant. "What *can* have come over Tom?" she asked herself. But she could get no chance to speak to him alone, till late in the evening, as he was going up to bed. Then she pounced upon him out of her little room.

"Now Tom Hammond, you've got to tell me what is the matter. Something has happened, and something very unusual, too. I can read you like a book."

"Yes, something wonderful," said Tom, trying to clear his throat. "You know I've been trying, ever so many weeks, for — something,"

he paused ; it was heard to tell even Christie "Mr. Anthon and Mr. Greyson tried to help me, you know, but I couldn't see anything clear. But this morning, Christie, I don't know how it was—I don't know how to tell you what I think happened. Well, you know I said I climbed that tree. I think, at last, I saw the Lord, and — and — Wait a minute."

He vanished, but reappeared in a minute, with a little book, which he thrust into Christie's hand.

"There, finish it yourself," he said huskily, and darted away again.

It was open at the old story of the publican Zaccheus. Christie read the verse enclosed in pencil marks.

"And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully."

And on the margin over against it, Tom had written :

"And that day, Jesus was a guest in the house of him that was a sinner."

Christie rushed breathless to Tom's room, and found him with his face buried in the pillows.

"You dear old boy !" said she, shaking him. "Do you mean that you are a—that you are going to try the 'Plan'?"

"That's just it. Going to fight it out on that line," said Tom, smothered but vigorous.

"But it is so very hard," sighed Christie.  
"Do you really think you can?"

"I shall always ask for help, you know, Kriss," he said softly, "and then," he raised himself, nodding his head determinedly, "I shall do my very best."

Christie burst into tears. "Then, of course, I must try, too. You know, Tom, we always did everything together."

## CHAPTER VI.

### TRYING IT



IT was an April morning, and Christie sat at her window, quite lost in thought. She had made numberless resolutions during the past few weeks, seemingly for the purpose of breaking them, but this morning, a stirring letter from Tom — gone back for his closing term — had aroused her to new energy.

“I really must try harder,” she said, “I will begin again to-day. I’ll begin with being kind to Aunt Hopper, that’s the toughest thing. I’ll take her a basket of eggs, on the way to school.”

“You may tell your *mother* that I am very much obliged,” said the old lady, stiffly, upon presentation of the offering. Nobody could help noticing where Aunt Hopper’s voice went into italics.

"Mother didn't have anything to do with them this time," returned Christie, cheerfully. "I wanted to bring them myself."

"What for?" asked Aunt Hopper, with dismaying brevity, and one of those suspicious looks over her spectacles that Christie hated. She had always told Tom she was sure they went *through* her, because she could feel them running in a cold chill down her back.

"The eggs were laid by my own three hens, Aunt Hopper," she said, stammering a little, "and I knew you were fond of 'em, and I'd rather you would have them than any one, because — because —"

She had always wanted to tell Aunt Hopper she was sorry about that society night; with a very little encouragement, she would have done it.

But the old lady repeated satirically:

"'Because — because' — There is one thing to be said for you, Christina Hammond, you were certainly cut out for a *truthful* girl; anything else chokes you. Now confess," continued this disheartening old lady, "that you would much rather have thrown them a'll at my head!"

Christie laughed in spite of herself. She

hadn't thought of it when she first came, but the idea was not without its fascinations.

Even Aunt Hopper herself, who had a certain grim sense of humor, relaxed a little ; but she quickly recovered herself.

"It is better that we should understand each other," she said. "You don't care a rye-straw for *me*. That's plain enough ; and I will be fair with you. This is a poor place for people to leave any kind of eggs. If they think they will find sitting hens to hatch out a thousand dollars or so, by and by, they will be very much mistaken."

"I didn't deserve that, Aunt Hopper, indeed I didn't," said Christie, just ready to cry. "I don't want one cent of your money. And I'm *very* sorry I ever thought of bringing the eggs. That's the truth, any way."

She rushed through the door, coming plump against some object in the dark entry, in a way that bade fair to solve the old problem—"What would be the result, if an irresistible force should come in contact with an immovable body?"

"You gave me such a start, dear," gasped poor Mrs. Crum, recovering from the crash, with undisturbed serenity, and good-nature. "What

is the matter? I was most afeard your poor aunt was took with a fit."

"She is," laughed Christie, delighted to meet the dear, sympathizing old nurse, who had taken her through scarlet-fever and measles, and knew all the ins and outs of her heart, almost as well as her mother. "Come right out here," she said, dragging her to the back piazza, "I want to tell you something."

A few vigorous words set the late interview vividly before Mrs. Crum, the copy being very fully up to the original in coloring.

"Now what do you think of her?" she finished up warmly. "To always say such hateful, ugly things! she can't possibly be a Christian, *can* she?"

"I'm glad it isn't for me to judge," said Mrs. Crum, humbly, when Christie stopped to take breath. "But I'll tell you one thing, dear, we mustn't be too quick. When such things is said to me—mebbe it's because I've mused so much, and seen a good deal of sick folk's ways—but I jest ask myself, 'Now did them words come from a bad heart, or a weak back?' And ten chances to one it will turn out the back, and then you can't feel so hard. Now I'm sure your aunt has a

real hankerin' for you down in her heart; she's quite proud when we talk you over, sometimes. I've always thought you was truly the favorite of the two." Mrs. Crum nodded mysteriously. "But she's uncommon mis'able this morning. I've come up to nuss her a day or two."

"O, is that it? I'm sorry;" and back flew impetuous Christie, again bursting through the sitting room door.

"Aunt Hopper I didn't know you were feeling so, this morning, or I shouldn't have minded a word you said. I'm sorry I got angry, and I'm *very* sorry you're so sick —"

"So sick?" repeated Aunt Hopper, sharply. "What does the child mean? I've a good constitution. I've as good a chance of living twenty years longer as any one in Millburgh. But it's a bitter thing when people begin calculating on one's death." She took out her handkerchief, beginning to cry weakly to herself.

Who could get along with Aunt Hopper?

"Her back is something uncommon, this morning," whispered Mrs. Crum, hurrying Christie from the room.

The two lingered a few minutes on the

piazza, and there was something so pleasant and sympathizing in the way the broad hand smoothed Christie's hair, that she began opening her heart to the kind old woman, before she knew it.

"You would never guess that I was trying to be a better girl, would you, nurse?" she said, simply; but something in her eyes told a deeper story than the words.

"Be you? I'm so glad," said Mrs. Crum, heartily. "I was sure you wouldn't get much older, without thinking on it. You was always so bright and clear-headed from the very first. Why," laughed Mrs. Crum, in fond reminiscence, "I remember you was born a little after two, and you was lyin' on my lap when the clock struck three, and your mite of a head turned like lightnin' to look at it. If you could have spoke, it's my belief you'd have told the hour, quite correct."

Christie laughed over this remarkable instance of precocity. "But Mrs. Crum," she said, returning to the subject, "I get so discouraged, sometimes, after talking to Aunt Hopper, for instance, I don't believe I have begun at all."

"I hope you are not trying by yourself,

dear," said the old woman gently. "That's a bad mistake ; folks always fail in that. You must just give yourself all up ; and then you mustn't be scared if you don't jump right from a sinner into a saint, all in one minute. You see, dear, when you're first born into that new life, you are nothing but a mite of a baby — you jest know you're alive, and somebody loves you. You can't walk, and you can't talk, but you will a year from now, if you grow healthy."

"I'll *try* to grow," said Christie, looking up brightly.

"Yes, you'll have to. And don't be down-hearted if you have a good many fights with that old Christiny. She was born fust, you know, and is pretty strong. She's got sixteen years the start of the baby."

"That's a capital idea, nurse," cried Christie. "Wont we have some tough battles, though ! But I mean to make the old Christie always give up to the baby. See if I don't."

"But don't let it stay a baby too long," cried Mrs. Crum, as Christie waved an adieu, half way down the block.

At the corner, she met the girls. Lu and Christina, and Belle ; all so young and gay.

"Do you know Lu's brother is coming home from Europe next month ?" asked Belle. "They have just heard. He has spent the last six months in Paris, and is perfectly fascinating, *isn't* he, Lu ?"

"There is nobody to compare with him in Millburgh," said Lu, complacently. "He has had every advantage, and then he always was very gentlemanly."

"I think Mr. Greyson has nice manners," observed Belle.

"Yes, but old-fashioned, rather too quiet, I think ; not the real Paris style."

"Papa says he is a perfect gentleman, said Christie. "He travelled with him, in a party, once, and he said if you wanted to know what was the worst, most uncomfortable place in stage, or cars, or hotel, you had only to look where Mr. Greyson had put himself, and there it was. I thought that was lovely."

"So did I," said Lu. "When I heard your father speaking of it, I made up my mind to act just like him, but girls, you have no idea what a hard thing it is to keep up. I gave out in just three days."

"As long as these little fevers generally run," said Christina Winter, in her cool way. The conversation flagged a little. Nobody liked to be very enthusiastic in such matters, before Christina.

They revived, however, over the announcement that Belle was to have an elegant spring suit, made exactly like her cousin Adelaide Horton's.

"She gets all her dresses abroad, you know," said Belle, "the sweetest things! you can tell them the minute you see them, they have such a different look, such an *air*."

They were all talking fast enough now. To have a dress with "an air" is such a positive, desirable good, to a girl of sixteen.

"Harvey will bring me two or three suits, at least," said Lu. "He is very particular about the way a lady should dress."

This was very disheartening to Christie, who pondered anxiously whether Belle would lend a pattern, or whether she herself could in any way contrive to throw this intangible something over the plain garments, now being made by the little Millburgh dressmaker.

Just then Mr. Anthon turned the corner.

"How the empty heads rattle," said he, liking to have his joke with the girls.

"Empty heads!" laughed Christie, forgetting her troubles, and running to take his hand. "Did you know you were paying us a compliment? Don't you remember girls, what Mr. Carter told us? She rehearsed it triumphantly, that the gray matter supposed to be the seat of intelligence was a *lining* spread over all the cavities of the brain, and, of course, the bigger the holes, the more it took to cover them, and the more brains one had."

"Pretty good!" laughed Mr. Anthon, "you are my bright little sixpence among pennies. I must go straight home to my study. I have always been afraid of the girls; I must work hard to keep up with them."

"Isn't she very forward?" whispered Belle.

"She loves to show off," returned Christina. "She is never happy unless she is absorbing all the attention."

Christie caught something, and turned quickly, but the two faces were so guileless and pleasant, she thought herself mistaken.

"How did you happen to be coming down Spencer street this morning?" asked Christina, suddenly recollecting where she had joined them.

"Been up to see Aunt Hopper. I mean to go oftener than I have done."

"Coming to your senses at last?" said Christina, curling her lip a little. "Well, I'm sure I wish you every success, but I think you're a trifle late."

Christie perfectly understood her; her mouth was fairly open with a sharp reply, when Mrs. Crum's quaint admonition occurred to her. Here was a chance for wilful, quick-tempered Christie to give up; she was quite ashamed of herself to find it so hard.

"I'm afraid you are right," she said, with an effort. "It will take a long time, at least, for Aunt Hopper to forget all my rudeness and selfishness."

The girls all stared at each other. This was so very different from Christie.

"My dear child," cried Lu, provokingly, "whatever you do, don't, *don't* be a prig. We don't want to lose our old Christie."

"And I don't want to be a 'prig,' I'm sure," said Christie, vehemently. "I hate it more than any of you, but —"

She hesitated. She wanted to tell the girls — it would never be easier than now; but it required some courage.

"Don't laugh at me, girls," she said desperately, "but ever since Mr. Anthon's sermon, I've been thinking about that higher life. And I *would* like to be — a little different."

"Well!" exclaimed Christina Winter, "of all the girls I ever knew, you're the last one I should have expected to make such a statement as that."

"I don't know why," retorted Christie, very much excited. "I think you might have said something kinder than that, though to be sure, I had no reason to expect it."

Christina gave a provoking glance at the other girls. "No immediate alarm about losing the old Christie, Lu."

They all laughed, while Christie bit her lips in silence. It was too true. She walked on flushed and humiliated, while Belle, seeming to consider the whole matter of very small importance, returned to the superior subject of dress.

"They say," said Belle, who was always unpleasantly conscious of rather unfinished features, and a muddy complexion, "they say that *style*, elegant dress and manners, takes much better in the best society, than mere beauty of

face." She glanced at Christie, as she drew up her fine, elegant figure.

"It is impossible for some people to have style, no matter how hard they try," said Christina Winter, following the direction of her eyes. "Why Christie," she exclaimed, as if just struck by the fact, "how small you are! I wonder if you will never grow any more. I do hope you will; it will be such a pity!"

The unwholesome sweet of Mr. Anthon's compliment had surely been sufficiently neutralized. Christina's features, rather inefficient in the portrayal of very strong emotions, conveyed, upon this occasion, a most satisfactory impression of inward self-approval.

"Promise me, Christina, that you won't be too unhappy about it," said Christie, trying in vain to be cool. "Remember it is a world of disappointment. I would spare you the trial if I could; but I'm afraid you'll have to bear it."

"Well, really, I don't know but there's enough of you, after all," said Christina, looking at her, in her self-possessed, irritating way. "I take it back. I don't think it at all desirable that there should be any more."

Christie was very angry now; she had quite

lost control of herself, as all the sharp-sighted girls could see. There is no knowing what might have been said, if they had not just then met Mr. Carter at the door of the Millburgh Academy, and some very lively coals of revenge had to be smothered in the ashes of silence.

But Christie was very unhappy when she came to think it over. All day, if one girl whispered to another, she imagined them calling her "prig," and "humbug"; she felt that she deserved it. When school was over, she avoided them all, and hurried home alone.

"An utter failure so far," she said, lingering a moment, with her hand on the door, "and I'm afraid it always *will* be;" her eyes filled with tears.

"'One misty, moisty morning,  
When cloudy was the weather.'"

cried some one cheerily.

It was Mr. Greyson, just passing by. She had not seen him for a long time; she had rather avoided meeting him of late; but now his frank, cordial tone told her that he, at least, had forgotten everything, and the pleasant old footing was established between them.

"Is there anything I can do?" said he, in

his kind manner. "We are rather past the good old times when a picture-book could dry every tear, and a dolly's wooden hand was strong enough to open the very door of Paradise. Pity, isn't it."

Christie nodded, with a very faint smile.

"I am afraid you are studying too hard," said he, more soberly, "you look tired. Tell me about it, Christie."

Christie shook her head quickly. "Not for the world," she thought to herself.

Mr. Greyson looked in some perplexity at her suddenly glowing cheeks.

"These little girls grow older so very fast," said he, "you do not like me to call you 'Christie' any more. I must begin to say *Miss* Christie, or *Miss* Hammond."

"Oh, no," Christie laughed, "that would be absurd. I should as soon expect it of papa."

There was the least little elevation of Mr. Greyson's eyebrows.

"By the way, it is almost time for papa to be home. Won't you come in? No? Oh, papa will be so sorry, and so will mamma."

"But Christie won't break her heart," laughed Mr. Greyson, walking away with his firm, rapid step.

"How did he know?" thought Christie, a little disconcerted; it seemed so ungrateful. "I am sure I should have liked to talk with him longer, but there are my lessons, and that dreadful composition; I must think very hard over that. It must be something very uncommon. Harvey Davison will be home to hear it, and I would like to show him, —"

Here she reached her own room, the pretty little *pink* room, pink paper on the walls, the toilet table covered with folds of muslin over pink cambric, a little pink wash-bowl, and pitcher, altogether a very rosy, cheerful room, that seemed all in keeping with its bright little mistress. The only window had a distant view of hills, wooded nearly to the summit, a group of monarchs often crowned by the gold of the setting sun. The *near* view was more homely, but still pleasing, consisting of the garden, the barn, and the woodshed. From the vicinity of the last mentioned building, a low wail was now arising, in which Christie speedily recognized the voice of John-Jack. She peeped through the blinds, and found him tearfully contemplating a quantity of loose wood, which he had evidently been asked to split and pile. His friends were around him as usual, Sancho, the dog, and Tip, the

eat, and Dump, with eyes full of commiseration. She was always intensely interested in Jack's tragic dialogues and conflicts.

"I can't do it," Jack was whining, just at this minute, "I've got everything to do. I ought to mend Sancho's house. And I'm tired too."

"For shame! for shame, Jack!" interposed a stern tone, so unlike the first, it would have startled any one making John's acquaintance for the first time. "Get up, and do it this minute! You are a lazy, good for nothing fellow."

Jack burst into a bitter howl at this aspersion.

"You're very hard with me, John. You think because it's easy for you to be good, it's easy for me. Why, I'm only Jack, poor Jack."

"Hush, Jack," haven't you any gratitude in you?" cried the inexorable John. "Could you think of going in to eat your supper, after being so mean?"

"Biscuits for tea, too," interpolated little Dump, flushed with interest.

"Biscuits for tea," repeated the stern John, "and you couldn't cut a little wood to bake 'em. How can any one ever love you? O, just let *me* get hold of you once! I'll shake you, and shake you!"

"O, stop John," cried Jack, getting up hasty-

ly, and running for the axe. "I'll do it ! I'll do it, but nobody will love me if I do. They *can't* because I'm only Jack, I'm only poor Jack !"

His howl now became perfectly frightful. Dump burst into tears. Sancho put his nose in the air, and added an inconsolable alto to Jack's tenor, while poor puss hastened to hide herself under a currant bush.

Christie laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. But as she continued to watch him, working very patiently now, but laying each stick in its place with a sob, "Nobody to love me, any way John, I'm only poor Jack ;" she suddenly found her mirth all gone. It was very pathetic, after all.

She remembered the morning when he came to her with those red, coarse hands, meaning to please her. She had always been sorry about that, and meant to have said something kind, long ago, but she had been so busy with school, and the meetings, and the girls, she had forgotten all about it, and then he had kept out of her way. Poor fellow ! he seemed to have feelings just like other people. She didn't think of such a thing at first. By the way, had she ever made him that little bow, she promised ? She fairly started. "What would John say to *me* ?" she cried,

throwing down her books, and rushing to her ribbon drawer. Which did he like best? O, the bright scarlet; she remembered how he touched it once, with one of his ugly fingers, when it was on her neck, touched it with a little chuckle of delight, and she had been so cross with him. Well, she would try to be kinder, she thought, swiftly modelling the bright ribbon after the fashion of Tom's best neck-tie. She was more than doubtful, after the morning's experience, whether that new life had begun, but if it had, — and it must be very feeble indeed, — Mrs. Crum had told her that nothing nourished it and made it grow, like words and deeds of *love*. This too, was according to the "Plan."

"Jack," she cried, looking from the window soon afterwards, "will you come up to my room a minute?"

Come up to her room! Jack — his forehead wet with perspiration, his hands harder and more grimy than ever — paused and stared with a bewildered face. He surely had not heard aright.

Christie repeated the invitation, and Jack fairly turned pale with astonishment. Would he come up to her room! Would Mahomet go up to the seventh heaven! Jack took off his ragged cap,

bowed nearly to the ground, and vanished in the back stoop.

Christie waited one minute, two, nearly five. Why don't the stupid fellow come ! " she said. And just then he appeared in the door, his face shining, and hair yet dripping with a hasty, but conscientiously severe scrubbing, and his poor offending hands carefully cased in a pair of Tom's old gloves.

" Jack," said Christie, in her short abrupt way, " here is the bow I promised you, and I'm sorry I didn't make it before."

Jack was painfully confused; he half stretched out his hand, but dropped it again; he was trembling all over. There had been no preparation for this astonishing honor. He had thought in his simple mind, that perhaps she was going to trust him with some errand, perhaps let him carry one of her pretty perfumed notes to the girls ; *that* would have been honor enough for the overflowing of his shallow cup. But that she had really made him the neck-tie out of one of her own beautiful ribbons ! No knight kneeling to receive the Cross of Honor, ever felt a more intoxicating thrill of happiness than swelled almost to bursting, the heart of poor John-Jack.

"Did I choke you, Jack?" cried Christie, starting back, as she pinned on the bow.

Jack's face was so purple, and there was a succession of explosive chuckles, and inarticulate attempts at speech, that were quite alarming.

Jack, for answer, dropped upon his knees, reverently kissed the ruffle of the plain brown dress, and then dashed away, making two bounds of the stairs; and never pausing till he had hidden himself in the top loft of the barn.

Dump, calling him for tea, found him there, an hour after, still talking busily to himself.

"There Jack, I told you she would remember. *You* said she wouldn't; you are always so mean, Jack."

"Yes, but let's keep it a secret, John," said Jack, coaxingly. "You wouldn't tell her. Anyway," here his voice broke into triumph, "She gave it to *me*, she didn't give it to you, John. She said, 'here Jack.' Yes, she gave it to poor Jack!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### LU'S BROTHER.

"JUNE 25.

**D**EAREST OLD TOM :

"The examination is over, and I've been down three days with one of my desperate headaches. Suppose I worked too hard, but I'd do it right over again, and be sick a fortnight, rather than give up all the triumphs I've had. I must tell you all about it.

You know Christina is a bright girl, and so is Emma Green, and they have been studying very hard all the term. Christina told Lu that they were going to teach me a few things, that I wasn't quite so remarkable as I thought myself. She said too, that Mr. Carter had fed me on flattery till I was in great danger of mental dyspepsia, and nothing would be so good for me as a piece of humble-pie. So she meant to make me eat it. Wasn't that mean? You may know I 'put in,' after that. I wouldn't go any.

where, although Harvey Davison came home a fortnight ago, and there have been three or four little parties for him. I just studied and studied, and worked on my composition. I wrote that over, four times. It was a poem, Tom, — you shall see it the minute you come home, — and the subject was ‘Night.’ Harvey Davison says I showed a true poetical instinct in my choice; all great poets love the night and the sea.

“O, Tom, how I wish you knew Harvey Davison! He is very accomplished, knows all about the world, has the most elegant manners you can imagine, and is perfectly charming in conversation. I think the secret is, that he has what might be called a sympathetic nature, he seems to understand you right away, and appreciate every word you say, while he is so very humble about himself. Everybody is praising him, unless it is mother, and she — well sometimes I think she is a little prejudiced against the whole family. For instance, Mrs. Davison was here the other day, with Fred, — he’s the youngest, — and he told two or three up and down stories. Mrs. Davison said, ‘O, you naughty boy!’ but she laughed, and I did, too. But mother was so sober, that I felt it my duty to reprove her after the company was gone. I

thought she might have smiled a little, it was nothing but polite. But she asked me if I would laugh if I saw somebody putting out a child's eyes? and she said she was afraid Mrs. Davison was doing something worse; she was putting out a *soul's* eyes, so that by and by Fred wouldn't see any difference between the truth and a falsehood — he would think one no worse than the other, indeed, she doubted whether he would know half the time, that he was telling lies at all.

“Mother defended herself very well, you see, and, of course I had to kiss her, and forgive her. But I am sorry she allows this to prejudice her against Harvey. He is so different, — the very soul of sincerity.

“But I am not telling you about the examination — I got through splendidly, Tom. You may throw up your hat and hurrah. Mr. Greyson, and Mr. Anthon, and papa were all there to hear the grand recitation in moral science, and Mr. Anthon asked ever so many puzzling questions. At first all the girls answered, but by and by they all dropped off, and I was the only one who could say a word. Papa was so pleased, and he called me ‘little daughter,’ as he always does when he's proud of me. And I

heard Mr. Anthon say to Mr. Greyson : ' She's a clear-headed little thing. She will make more than an ordinary woman.'

" Now Tom, I know that sounds frightfully conceited, but you made me promise to tell you everything. You must burn the letter the minute you read it.

" I ought to tell you though, that everything didn't go perfectly smooth. When I was dressed for the evening, — I was all in white, with my skirt looped up with roses, — papa said I looked like a fairy ; but mamma didn't flatter me a bit. She only told me I was too triumphant, and was showing my pride and vanity too plainly. The greatest minds, in hours of triumph were most humble ; and if I didn't conquer these unlovely traits, I wouldn't have any friends, and wouldn't deserve any. That took me down astonishingly, so now you have both sides.

" Besides, John Jack *would* go, and sit right on a front seat, and he chuckled out loud, two or three times, so everybody turned to look, and I heard Christina telling Harvey Davison that he was my cousin.

" My composition was the only one in rhyme, and I was appointed to read *last*, with a kind of valedictory besides. Of course all the girls were

furiously angry, except Lu, who is my best friend, you know. She took my part very warmly, and told me a great many of the disagreeable things that were said about me. One of the worst was, that Belle said her mother had seen every word of my poem, somewhere, verse for verse. It was perfectly familiar to her, though she couldn't tell where. Wasn't that very hard to hear? I'm afraid Mr. Greyson may have heard of it, for when he was called on for a speech, he praised all the girls just alike, and spoke of Christina's and Lu's compositions just as highly as he did of mine. All the girls noticed it, and Christina said afterwards,

“ ‘You see Mr. Greyson doesn't think you are any more clever than the rest of us, if you *are* Mr. Carter's favorite.’

“ Mr. Carter had a little collation after the exercises, and invited all the scholars with a few of their friends. This was where I became so well acquainted with Harvey Davison. I had such a nice long talk with him; he hardly spoke to any one else all the evening, which was very nice, because he is considered a kind of a lion just now. Christina and Belle were anything but pleased, I can tell you.

“ O, Tom, I do wish you knew Harvey Davi-

son. He is what the girls call fascinating. He says himself, that his chief fault is too great frankness ; but I like him all the better for his impulsive way of saying things ; it only proves how very sincere he is. For instance, that evening, while he was telling me about his travels, he stopped so suddenly, you couldn't help seeing the thought had just struck him, and said,

"Miss Hammond, your companions watch you, admire you, try to imitate you, and then make themselves unhappy because they succeed no better.'

"And then, Tom, he seemed so sorry the moment he had said it. I'm afraid I must have colored a little, for he seemed quite wretched at the thought of having offended me ; he begged my pardon beautifully ; he would never insult any one he truly admired with flattery ; indeed, he had known the minute he met me that I could not be flattered, but I really must forgive this, which I must see was a little self-evident truth, and had leaped from his lips before he could help it.

"Then Tom, once more, just to give you an idea of him, I said at the table, that I didn't like oysters, and he immediately put down a plateful he had just taken, saying,

“ ‘ Miss Hammond — whose taste is so perfect in everything — condemns oysters. I shall never eat another.’ ”

“ Wasn't that very gentlemanly? He always speaks in that short, impressive way. Something like Victor Hugo, I think. I wish you had a little of his polish, Tom, though mother, of course, says she would rather have you take Mr. Greyson for a model. I wouldn't have the girls know she said that for the world; they would think she was so queer. Mr. Greyson is very commonplace beside him. But you musn't think he has polish alone. He knows just everything, and is quite well acquainted with Socrates, and Confucius, and all those deep old wells of wisdom. And that reminds me of another thing. He was repeating a remark of Socrates, — ‘ there is but one good, which is knowledge, and one evil, which is ignorance,’ — when he turned to me in that earnest, sincere way, and said,

“ ‘ Let me congratulate you, Miss Hammond, that you are forever delivered from evil.’ ”

“ Now Tom, you will think I am too full of vanity to ever have a thought of anything better. But I do try sometimes. That very evening, when I saw the girls looking so so-

ber, I excused myself, — although I was having such a splendid time, — and went over to talk to them. I said everything pleasant I could, and told them all the compliments I had heard for them. But I didn't get much reward for my sacrifice as Lu told me afterwards. She says, after I was gone, she said to them all, — she is so fond of me, you know, —

“ ‘Isn't Christie a sweet girl? I do truly think she means to be a Christian.’ ”

“ And Christina said, ‘ She means to be all things to all men, if that's being a Christian.’ She is crazy to have everybody admire her, even down to idiots and cats and dogs. She is like that girl that couldn't see a cat looking at her without wondering what the cat thought of her. And then when Lu was very indignant, and reminded her what kind things I had been saying, she said :

“ ‘ Yes, she can be very sweet if she chooses, but *self* is at the bottom of it all. She's ‘ the same dog with a different collar.’ ”

“ Wasn't that mean in her, Tom ? I couldn't help telling Lu just what I thought about it, which I'm afraid was foolish and weak. She promised not to tell, but you know you can't

always depend on Lu. If it wasn't for that one fault, she would be such a lovely girl!

"You asked me about the 'new life,' Tom, and I'm ashamed to tell you about it, it is so very feeble. Mother says, I stab it again and again with my tongue, and I'm afraid she is right. I haven't been to any of the meetings in a long time; I have been cramming so for examination. The last time I was there, Uncle Hopper arose, of course, and everybody looked as happy as when there's a shower of rain at a picnic. I was busy most of the time, wondering what he could have been made for; but I had to give it up, couldn't account for him any more than for earthquakes, and typhoons, and all that kind of thing. Tom, if the time ever comes when I find myself *loving* Uncle Hopper, I shall be frightened. I shall know it is the very highest attainment of grace, and, as that dear old Crum says, I'm afraid I shall be 'too good to live.' Of course you needn't be in any immediate alarm.

"I go to see Aunt Hopper almost every day but it is hard work; she is very suspicious and cold. Sometimes I think Christina—but I have said ugly things enough in this letter. I may

wrong her. Mother says, I *must* get over my rash, nasty judgments.

“One thing was very unfortunate, though. I went up to Aunt Hopper’s one morning — it was about two months ago, when there were so many meetings, (church bells ringing all the time,) and I hardly missed one of them, — and found Christina there before me. I suppose she had been telling Aunt Hopper something about it, for as soon as I came in, she put on her spectacles, and I felt the spinal column turning into an icicle.

“‘So Christie Hammond,’ she said, ‘I hear you are indulging a hope. I *hope* you are not mistaken.’

“If you could only have heard the way she said it, Tom. It made me so hot and angry, and before I thought, I said something back.

“‘What did you say?’ said Aunt Hopper, who is a little deaf, you know. I was so glad she didn’t hear, and I made signs to Christina not to tell. But she laughed and laughed.

“‘That is so good,’ she said. ‘Aunt Hopper, she hopes you will indulge *your* hope as much as you can. Isn’t that just like Christie?’

“And then she laughed again. Now you know, Tom, she didn’t think it a good joke at

all. She knew it would make Aunt Hopper angry, and it ought to. It was very impudent and flippant in me, and I was so sorry the minute it was out. You may imagine how Aunt Hopper looked, but she only said,

“‘That proves beyond a doubt, that you *are* mistaken,’ and then she began to talk to Christina about some preserves and pickles, and wouldn’t look at me again.

“I don’t much believe I ever can convince her that I am in earnest, and I can’t wonder at it. But I make myself go to see her, and take her little things, because it does so knock that selfish old Christie in the head, and that may give the new life a better chance.

“I am teaching John-Jack to read too, and mother says she is prouder of that, than of my beautiful composition. Isn’t she queer ?

“It isn’t so hard to be kind to Jack, as I thought it would be. He is very grateful for everything. He keeps a little bow that I made for him, wrapped up in cotton like a precious jewel. He has some glimmers of refinement, too; he always wears your gloves when he comes in to his lessons. A queer notion, but I don’t discourage it; it makes it much pleasanter for me, he has such ugly hands. I wish I were

not so fastidious about such things, but I don't know how to get over it. Mother is so different. I can't understand how she ever came to have such a daughter. You know that old Miss Bowen, who has had consumption so many years, — well, mother goes over every night, since it has been so warm, and bathes her feet! They say it is such a relief to her, now that she has grown so restless. But *I* never could do it, if I lived a thousand years. I should faint, I know. Perhaps — perhaps I might, if I washed my hands in a hundred kind of soaps when I came home, and put on a bottle of perfumery, but I wouldn't like to. It worries me when I think about it. I suppose all this belongs to the 'Plan,' and I'm sure I can't see where the *happiness* comes in.

“What a tremendous letter I have written. It has taken me two days, but I wanted to tell you everything. And O, Tom, when you come home, be sure not to mention that bad speech of mine. I haven't dared to tell mother for fear she would think just as Aunt Hopper does. But you must help me, and believe in me a little, or I don't know what will become of

“YOUR BAD OLD KRISS.”

"P. S. I didn't tell you that a notice of the examination came out to-day in the Millburgh Chronicle, and my poem is mentioned in the highest terms. Here are the very words :

" 'It exhibits a depth of thought, and felicity of expression, which we have only been accustomed to expect from our most finished writers, whose heads have been already crowned in the temple of Fame. At times we were forcibly reminded of the inspired strains of Mrs. Browning.'

"What do you think of that, for your little sister Christie? Mother calls it nonsense, and it may be rather too high praise, but it has put an idea in my head. If we should ever be poor, I shall turn authoress. I know I could make a great deal of money in that way. Harvey Davison told me last night, in that simple, sincere way of his, that if I could only keep up that strain a little longer, and write a *book* full of such grand ideas, I should be *immortal*! He told me a great deal about himself too, last night. He said he had seen so much of the world, had drained the cup of life almost to its dregs! (think of that Tom, and he is only three or four years older than you,) and he finds it very difficult now, to experience a new sensa

tion. So that the other evening when listening to my poem, he suddenly found himself *feeling*, — he was quite astonished. He had become so indifferent to everything.

“He looked so sad when he said it, I couldn’t help wondering what his experiences had been. I believe he is capable of the very deepest feeling, but, of course, as he is so superior, and different from ordinary mortals, it must take something out of the ordinary course of events to call it out. Deep calls unto deep. He certainly is one of those thoroughly noble characters who, whatever their faults, could never have done anything mean or cowardly. He could never at any time in his life have acted as Mr. Grey — O, I forgot, you don’t know. No matter. I suppose he is trying to atone for it, and as Lu Davison says, ‘there’s a fly in almost every pot of ointment.’

“One thing more. I must tell you a little joke about mother. When I was praising Harvey Davison, this morning, I couldn’t get her to admit a single thing, till at last I asked, ‘Can’t you see *anything* unusual about him, mother?’ And then she said —

“‘Yes, he has one of the most tenacious memories I ever knew.’

"Now that was encouraging, for Mr. Carter always says, a person who never forgets anything is next to a genius. But mother just added on,

"'He never for one moment forgets *himself*.'

"What do you think of that, for mother's tongue? I was delighted, and told her now we should get on splendidly together, and be the most comfortable pot and kettle in the world. Of course, I got my ears boxed, but I said just what I pleased all the rest of the day."

"P. S. No. 2. You will think I am going on forever ; but I have left out something very important ; I couldn't wait to tell you. Papa has invested nearly all his property in some salt works out West, and they are going to pay twenty or thirty per cent., or perhaps more ! It was a great chance for papa ; he only got in as a great favor, through a friend of Mr. Houghton. It seems as if you could see the hand of Providence in it ; we did need a lift so much. Not but that we have always been comfortable ; but lately everybody seems to be getting very rich, and it makes one uneasy. I wonder how it would seem to have as much money to spend as Belle and Christina. All the girls are going

to take French lessons in the fall. There is such a splendid professor in the city, and Lu says we could all go down together, twice a week, — just a pleasant little trip. I should like to take music lessons, too; and papa says I shall. He says he will indulge me in everything reasonable, just as soon as the profits begin to come in. We are both very much excited over it, — papa and I are something alike, you know, — but mamma is very quiet. Sometimes I think she doesn't quite approve of it, but papa says, 'Nothing dare, nothing share.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE THREE BLACKING-BOTTLES.



It was a warm evening in July. Christie and Belle and Lu had come to see Christie. They were all walking in the garden together, while Tom—home for the long vacation—was harassing them by a series of strategic movements, appearing from behind trees and lilac bushes at the most undesirable moments, and misunderstanding them in a very aggravating manner.

"I am so sorry," said Christie to Lu, "that Tom isn't going to have a chance to see your brother. Isn't he getting 'most enough of that fishing and hunting?"

"O, no! he is having grand times; and then his friends are so fond of him, they won't let him off very soon I can promise you."

Christie didn't at all wonder.

"If there doesn't come Mr. Greyson, taking a walk with your Uncle Hopper!" continued

Lu. "One wouldn't suppose that would be his taste; but, of course, birds don't flock together unless they have some feathers in common."

"Not a pin-feather!" cried Tom, "But it's his taste to do a kindness whenever he has a chance. Don't you see the old fellow has wandered a little too far from home, and his foundations are getting shaky. Greyson is just giving him a lift. Hullo!" he continued, as the two neared the light open fence, and paused to look over. "Don't stop; it's dangerous! There has just been a very lively skirmish. These are the warriors drawn up in a square, and I am the ambulance wagon to pick up the dead and wounded reputations."

There was a general outburst of indignation.

"I wonder what girls were made for?" said Mr. Greyson, with an air of profound perplexity; "I suppose there must have been some design."

While Christie was trying to think of some crushing reply, Uncle Hopper benevolently interposed.

"O, girls are not so bad; not so bad. That is, if they don't get too many of these new-fangled notions. I don't approve of giving them so much learning as is the fashion now-a-days;

it turns their heads," he nodded at Christie, "and makes them apt to forget that they're the weaker vessels — the weaker vessels. I think that's about the way Paul puts it, sir?"

Mr. Greyson nodded mischievously.

"But they need not be discouraged; they have their sphere, and it is an honorable one." Uncle Hopper wiped his face, in a glow of generosity. "Let them be discreet, keepers at home, — there's a field wide enough for them. Let them learn to control *themselves*, before they get ambitious for a bigger rule. Let them lead self-denying Christian lives. Why, in these matters," said Uncle Hopper, bowing and waxing chivalric, "they might even set *us* an example. Women ought to be better than men."

"Of course," said Christie, demurely, "it is the easiest thing in the world, to be a humble, self-denying Christian."

"You are showing great ignorance, child;" said Uncle Hopper, "it is the most difficult attainment possible."

"Then the argument seems to be," said Christie, a little spot of red in either cheek, "woman is the *weakest*; therefore she ought to be the *strongest*."

"My dear Kriss," said Tom, patting her back,

"you will be called to fill a Professor's chair, in less than five years."

But just then, Uncle Hopper felt a twinge of neuralgia, and Mr. Greyson, laughing, drew him away.

"O, girls," said Christina, when they had withdrawn to a safe distance from Tom. "I have heard something more about Mr. Greyson, lately. If I thought you'd never tell—"

"O, never!"

"Well, you know that story he told us about the man that went to prison? Whom do you think it was?" Cousin Martha Banks met a lady at the sea-shore this summer, who knew all about it, and the name was, — it does seem too dreadful, — it was Allan Greyson!"

"Not *our* Mr. Greyson?" said Christie, breathlessly.

"Yes; as near as she could describe him, it was the very one."

"But it couldn't be," said Belle; "that one was married, you know."

"O, that was probably a blind, to mislead us. Don't you remember how very much affected he was, when he told it? Besides, another proof, the lady said he was a *lawyer*. His crime was forgery; he was poor and ambitious, and he

forged to buy himself a library, — a kind of noble end, after all. Another thing that confirms it, is that Mr. Greyson is so very economical, while the firm has a splendid practice, and he goes off every little while on some mysterious business or other. I don't believe the matter is quite settled yet."

"Well, I don't think it is so very bad," said Lu. "There's a kind of romance about it, — I could like him just as well as ever."

"I couldn't," said Christie, looking very sober. "But there must be some mistake."

A coward, and been to State Prison! She would never believe it of her dear Mr. Greyson.

"Of course, he's reformed now," said Christina. "There is nothing against him *now*."

"Yes," returned Christie, "if that is all true, his life here seems a kind of deception. I can remember so many things he has said, which would be downright falsehoods if —"

"O, there isn't anything wrong in that," said Belle. "Just little evasions to mislead people who have no right to be prying into your affairs. I believe everybody tells dozens of those little white lies in the course of their lives."

Lu Davison held up her hands in horror.

"How *can* you say so, Belle? Why it

would just kill me if I believed that. I shouldn't want to live ! ”

Christie dropped the roses she was absently putting together, and stared at Lu. In fact, they all did. But Lu looked serenely virtuous and courageous, evidently without the faintest consciousness of having said anything surprising, — without the least glimpse of herself as others saw her. Christie remembered about putting out the soul's eyes. Was it true ? Was it possible that Lu did not, *could* not see ?

“ I thought Mr. Barrett said some very good things on the ninth commandment, last Sunday, didn't you ? ” continued Lu, complacently adopting the role of a reformer, and trying to fulfil her duty towards Belle.

Belle giggled. “ I don't believe I heard a word. As soon as he began to warm up, and get so red, and claw the cushion, I couldn't help thinking what Christie said about the lobster. He did look so exactly like it ! ” she laughed again. “ I don't believe I ever could listen to that man again, if he talked like Daniel Webster, Demosthenes and Cicero ! If I can only keep from laughing outright, that's all I can hope.”

Christie started, and then grew more sober





**The Story of the "Three Blacking Bottles."**  
**JOHN-JACK, PAGE 113.**

still. As soon as the girls were gone, she went up to her room to think over several things.

"Now you must all sit very still," broke in a voice, just as she seated herself at the window, "and not interrupt for the world, and I will tell you the true and terrible story of the 'Three Blacking-Bottles.'"

Christie looked, and saw Tom perched on a saw-buck just beneath, with Dump, John-Jack, and Sancho, — a delighted and expectant audience, — ranged on a log before him.

"There were once three young and beautiful princesses," began Tom, "who were sent for their education to a city of their father's kingdom. Their names were Malvina, Falsetta, and Selfira. They were received with the greatest attention, invited to all the grand parties and picnics, and were greatly admired and beloved. But in the midst of all the gaiety, there arose strange rumors of some mysterious enemy, who had come among them, and was doing a great amount of mischief. It seems that the people of this country were always anxious to be well dressed, and make a good appearance, and they were very particular about keeping their garments clean. But now they scarcely ever met together without some of them getting an ugly

spot on their coats or dresses, that mortified them extremely, and two or three had their best suits so entirely ruined, that they could not be persuaded to show themselves again. There was a very great excitement about it, but nobody could discover the enemy, or find out just the moment when the injury was done. The poor, good people were in despair, and it was quite touching to see the pretty young princesses, they looked so sad and so innocent.

“But, at last, so much harm was done, that they invited a very wise man to visit them. It was said that with his biggest spectacles, he had been able to count forty thousand, seven hundred and fifty-nine people, holding a picnic on the point of a needle, and he could make a skimmer of any man, by looking at him three times. He, if any one, would be able to find the offender. And it is very true that as he entered the room, where they were all gathered, *three* persons felt their spirits suddenly draining away as if it were out of a sieve.

“‘There they are!’ cried he, in a dreadful voice, without one moment of hesitation. ‘I caught them in the act.’

“The people followed the direction of his finger, and were shocked and astonished to find

that he pointed at the three pretty, young princesses. It was more dreadful still to discover that each one held one hand behind her, and it was full of dirt.

“‘Let them appear before me to-morrow morning, for their trial,’ said the wise man, in such a voice, that every rafter and beam in the house had a touch of fever and ague. Judge how the three princesses must have felt.

“So they were arrested, and on the next day all the people came out in their spattered and ruined clothes, to testify against them.

“The princess Malvina was first examined, and it was proved that she had no love—no affection for any body ; on the contrary, the better a person was, the more she hated him. If she ever saw any one with finer ornaments than hers, or with clothes that were whiter, and more gracefully fitted, she was straightway very angry, and lost no time in throwing a lump of dirt. She had a strange idea that the more she disfigured and ruined other garments, the better her own would appear. Her heart never relented at the thought of what sorrow she would cause ; she took her aim very coolly ; she meant the dirt to hit, and it generally did.

“There was a loud murmur of indignation,

as the princess Malvina was ordered to stand aside and await her sentence. No one had a word to say in her defence.

“ ‘I will cry a *river* of tears,’ said the princess Malvina.

“ ‘It is not enough to wash out such dirt,’ said the wise man.

“ The princess Falsetta was then called upon the stand. She tried to prove that she had no ill feeling towards any body. She confessed that she had thrown a little dirt, but she had only intended to hit ugly, bad dogs and cats, and very much to her surprise it had gone the wrong way. She often had a blindness, a swimming in her head, and couldn’t see plainly what she was about. If, on such occasions, the dirt sometimes flew where it didn’t belong, she thought they ought to forgive her.

“ But the jury couldn’t see that this was any excuse; in fact it only added to the blame. It was wrong to throw dirt at all, but especially wicked in a person who became so easily confused. And she, also, was ordered to stand aside, and await her sentence.

“ ‘I will cry a *lake* of tears,’ said the princess Falsetta.

“‘It is not enough to wash out such dirt as this,’ returned the wise man.

“But everybody was quite sorry for the princess Selfira, who was the youngest and prettiest, and almost always laughing.

“‘She is quite thoughtless,’ said one, ‘she didn’t mean the least harm. The dirt that she threw was not so black as the rest.’

“‘And yet,’ said an old watchman, ‘she has made such queer little patches and blots on *me*, that, although my garment is not much injured, still every one has to laugh when I come in sight, and I am not treated with any respect.’

“‘I had not the least idea of it,’ wept the princess. ‘I never dreamed of making a black mark on any one. I only threw a very little to amuse me. It was such great fun I didn’t know how to give it up. But I am very sorry now.’

“‘I am willing to forgive her,’ said the kind watchman.

“‘It will not do,’ said the wise man, ‘she has done much harm. Sometime when you are coming to warn the people of danger, of fire or robbers, they will stop to laugh at your queer, dirty coat, when they ought to be running for their lives. No, ~~she~~ she also is very dangerous, and

hard-hearted too. She does not stop to think of anything else, as long as she amuses and pleases *herself*.'

" 'I will cry an *ocean* of tears,' wept the princess Selfira.

" 'Even that would not be enough, with all Time for a washing day,' said the wise man. 'Let the three princesses stand up and receive their sentence!'

" They stood up trembling and weeping.

" 'Send them to their father,' said a voice.

" 'O, no!' cried the princesses, 'our father will be so angry if we come before he sends for us.'

" The wise man waved his wand. 'Take then your proper forms—the ones you have merited by your great crimes.'

" The unhappy princesses felt a cold chill down their backs, their limbs grew rigid, and casting down their eyes, they found their pretty garments changing into the deepest mourning.

" 'Are they corked?' asked the wise man, solemnly. And each princess felt her brains shutting in like a telescope, crammed down hard; they could no longer open their mouths.

" 'Shall we take them to prison, your Honor?' asked a policeman

“‘No, they are no longer dangerous. All the world can now see just what they are, and avoid them.’

“The young princesses, overcome with emotion, were carried fainting to their homes, where they lay speechless and senseless, a year and a day. When at last they recovered, each one looked at the other, gave a shriek of horror, and staggered to the long mirror. What do you think they saw? Instead of three beautiful golden-haired princesses, (Tom’s voice sank to a tragic whisper,) there were only—*three blacking-bottles!* It was horrible! and one was labelled, Malice, and one was labelled, Falsehood, and one, Selfishness!”

“Poor little princesses!” said John-Jack, with a heavy sigh.

“Yes, but the *people* were very glad. You see nobody got any more spots, because the moment one of the princesses came on the street, the cry would be raised,

“Take care! Here comes a blacking-bot—”

Tom’s flow of eloquence suddenly came to an undignified end in a gurgle and gasp. A tippet was woven quickly about his neck in choking folds.

“Wretch that you are!” cried Christie.

"You heard every word we were saying, all the while you were pretending to weed the mignonne. Now Tom, that was too mean!"

"To be well shaken before taken," gasped Tom, and catching her little hands, he mounted her on his shoulder, and in spite of protests, away they went all around the garden — a most undignified romp — John-Jack, Dump and Sancho all scuttling after.

"There, that is for punishment," said Tom, pausing, out of breath. "You know you meant murder, Kriss. I think I shall stutter, or at least, have a catch in my breath, all the rest of my life. What *had* I done?"

"You meant us girls," said Christie, shaking his broad shoulders. "The three blacking-bottles were Christina and Lu and I! Don't deny it, sir!"

"O, my dear Christie, what a dreadful idea! Perish the thought!" laughed Tom.

"Why no, Christie," said little Dump, "It was only three princesses who liked to throw dirt."

"With their tongues, dear. That's what this good-for-nothing Tom meant."

"What, cousin?" said John-Jack drawing nearer, with his eager, bewildered look. "With their *tongues*?"

"Yes, Jacky," said Christie kindly ; she was trying to be more patient with Jack. "All ugly words make black spots somewhere. That's what this wonderfully clever Tom was trying to say," she shook him again. "Now tell me, which one was I?"

"I didn't say any of them," said Tom, faintly. "But you can take your choice."

"You can't mean Falsetta. You know I don't tell stories ; none of our family could. And that horrible Malvina ! Now Tom, I don't see how you can say that I would do such dreadful things on purpose."

"I didn't," said Tom, meekly.

"I think cousin Christina is the tattletale—" began Dump.

"Has any body a cork?" asked Tom, looking around.

Dump gave a quick, frightened glance at her dress to see if it were turning black, and then stood very still.

"Then, of course, you mean Selfira," persisted Christie. "That is bad enough, but I may as well confess it." She threw herself back, despairingly. "Tom, if I had my deserts, I'd be turned into a blacking-bottle this minute !"

Jack raised one of his sudden, startling howls.

"You *must* stop making such noises, Jack," cried Christie, "they are very ugly."

Jack, just beginning on a second effort, of most superior quality, stood mute and motionless, as if struck by paralysis.

"Poor fellow ; he will never do it again," said Tom, kindly.

"I'll tell you what, Jack," said Christie repenting of her impatience, "if you wont make any more of those noises, nor cry out loud, — only babies do that, — for three months, I'll give you a nice present. What shall it be ?"

"A little red book like yours, with a clasp," said Jack, eagerly.

Christie agreed, and Jack chuckled with delight.

"Good words in that, cousin," he said, nodding his head, vigorously. "Heaven words."

"Yes, beautiful Heaven words," replied Christie, musing. "Do you know, Tom, mother says it seems a pity to learn so many words that we'll have no use for, if we ever get to Heaven.

"Yes," said Tom, shrugging his shoulders. "But if *I* didn't use any but the Heaven words, I should speak very seldom."

"And *I* should be dumb," laughed Christie.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHRISTIE'S JOHN.



O Christie isn't going into any of Uncle Hopper's old-fashioned 'spheres'?"

The voice was Mr. Greyson's; he had stopped again, on his way back, and leaning over the fence, had taken up the conversation where he left it.

"She will be a strong-minded woman, I suppose, and have a career."

"O no," cried Christie, earnestly. "Not in that way at all. I don't want to give lectures, nor vote, nor anything of the kind. But it provokes me that girls are expected to be so very good and brave, when they have so little to excite and encourage them. The 'sphere' is all well enough, but we are not expected to want any rewards; while men, who are stronger, have little honors all along, — a kind of milestones, to show every-body how far they've come. Now when a girl gets through with school at

sixteen or eighteen, she has taken her last prizes ; but Tom can go on and have D. D. or LL. D. or Hon. or a whole alphabet before and after his name."

"Would you really like an alphabet after your name?" smiled Mr. Greyson.

"Why not? *Men* like them, I suppose, or they would not give them and receive them. I've often wondered how it would seem to have my letters addressed to the Hon. Christina Hammond."

"You shall know, my dear Kriss," said Tom. "I'll see to it as soon as I go back."

"Of course you will laugh, but I know that girls miss a great deal. It makes my heart beat so fast, when I read about those French soldiers kneeling to receive a medal, or a cross of the Legion of Honor. If girls had some such chances, they would lead nobler lives; they wouldn't think half so much of their ribbons and bracelets. But they haven't," she sighed, "and so a girl is just shut up to working for the prizes of the next world."

"That's a very hard case," said Mr. Greyson.

"But it is something," added Tom, soothingly, "even to be sure of that."

"I am *not* very sure, that is the trouble."

Christie was getting excited. "I can't realize that Uncle Hopper could enjoy himself a minute if Aunt Hopper had just the same that *he* had. I think his first business would be to find you and Mr. Greyson, and see about getting us into a 'sphere.'"

"My dear Christie," cried Tom, in great alarm, "You never can get there at all, with that tongue. The kindest thing I can do—" he drew out a savage jack-knife, which opened with a significant click.

A shrill wail, suddenly suppressed, burst from the corner of the piazza.

"What is that?" cried Mr. Greyson, somewhat startled. "Has any body assassinated a railroad whistle?"

Tom laughed, as he went off to reassure poor John-Jack.

"I suppose I do talk too much," sighed Christie, "but girls *feel* every thing so quickly; they are quicker every way than boys. Mr. Carter says that steel can only be magnetized very slowly indeed, but the minute iron touches a magnet, it receives the virtue. Now the girls are like iron. You needn't laugh, Tom, I always learned my lessons quicker than you, when we went to school together, and you know it."

"I think Christie is right," said Mr. Greyson; but there was lurking around the corners of his mouth the little smile that always betokened danger. Christie was not at all sure of her ally.

"Did Mr. Carter happen to mention," he continued, "that as soon as the magnet was taken away, the iron lost all its power, but the slow steel, once magnetized, remained so forever? I'm afraid that was an unfortunate illustration, Christie. You never can be sure of the iron; you never can make a lodestone out of it. If you want anything to point *true*, you must make it out of *steel*."

Christie was greatly disconcerted, especially as Tom's triumph knew no bounds.

"To think you should have acknowledged it yourself, Christie! Girls are iron and boys are steel. That's true! You never can tell where to find them; think they are pointing to the North star, and most probably they have just struck on the South pole."

"Tom," said Christie, in her coldest possible tone, "You and Mr. Greyson are so exceedingly clever, it is a pity the girls haven't mind enough to admire you more."

"Is it possible they don't admire us!" said Tom, tragically.

"Yes, but of course, you wouldn't care for a girl's opinions."

"That proves what I was saying, Mr. Greyson," laughed Tom. "You would think that cold wind blew from Greenland; but I give you my word, she is headed straight for the hottest shores of Africa."

"They say," continued Christie, disdaining to notice the interruption, "What a pity it is that you don't resemble Harvey Davison a little more. But then, of course, he can't be a person of any talents, for he has some respect for girls; he seems to be afraid of hurting a girl's feelings, and no man, of any mind, would hesitate about that, you know."

"Tom, my dear boy," said Mr. Greyson, "Can you see whether my head is on, or off? That was so exceedingly sharp."

"Of course there is every variety of taste," said Tom, philosophically. "Now *we* say sometimes, why can't every girl be lady-like and amiable, like —"

"Belle Houghton," suggested Mr. Greyson.

"If you only knew Belle Houghton as well as *I* do," began impulsive Christie, and paused ashamed.

"What then?" asked Mr. Greyson, with that little smile.

"You would like her still better," finished Christie, very meekly.

"It was a snowy, blustering day in mid-winter; the roses were just bursting into bloom, and robins were singing from every tree," laughed Mr. Greyson. "What is she after now?"

"Trying to be milk and water, as that seems to be your ideal for the character of a girl," said Christie, growing a little warm about the eyelids.

"It is not *my* ideal," said Mr. Greyson, feeling that he had teased his little friend enough. "I've found the milk and water natures don't always keep the best when we come to the dog-days and thunder-showers of life. I like characters with more glow and sparkle, like wine, richer and more generous the older they grow, — such for instance, as —"

Christie looked up brightly. It was so pleasant to be appreciated. That was just the difference between her and most girls.

"Your cousin Christina!" finished Mr. Greyson; he could not resist the temptation. But he saw no more of Christie that night.

"Tom," said she a little later, coming behind him, as he stood alone on the piazza. It was a

drooping little figure, very different from the defiant Christie of an hour before.

"Tom, I have been so very foolish to-night. In fact I always am."

"Nonsense!" cried Tom, putting his arm around her. "The most sensible girl I ever saw. And I know Greyson thinks so too. He brought you a whole set of George Eliot's books — bought them on purpose for you — and he said he didn't think every girl would appreciate them."

"Did he?" said Christie, smiling faintly. "I was afraid he thought me the vainest, weakest—I wish I could tell him I didn't mean half I said. Why, Tom, you know if I should ever get to Heaven, I shouldn't care *how* low I was. I should expect all my friends to be above me—so far above, they would look like those little webs of light, Mr. Anthon spoke about —"

"In the 'Plan,' said Tom. "By the way, he was just right about that, wasn't he?"

"Every day proves it," said Christie with a sigh. "Just the last time Nancy went out, and Dump got so tired, carrying the baby, — I knew exactly what I ought to do, but I wouldn't do it. I was so interested in a book, — just at the most thrilling part, — that I was sure it would

make me happier to finish it. But that night when Dump tossed and tumbled, and couldn't forget her tired little legs, even in her dreams, — then I found out my mistake. I felt *degraded* — that's the right word, Tom — I can always tell when I've made a lower choice, sooner or later I have got to feel degraded. But it is hard, after all, Tom. I can't help liking the old Christie ; I can't always be making her give up."

"But I thought you just proved that she would be happier if she did."

"No, I don't get much happiness out of it yet. I only escape being miserable. But of course, the Inventor knows, and I don't want to give it up. I began all wrong at first, I'm afraid, — too much alone ; but lately," she said, softly, "I hoped it was different. Only to-night, Tom, I am so discouraged again about my tongue. Do you think it's possible the new life can have begun ?"

"Why not ?" said Tom, cheerfully; he did not feel like teasing her now. "No reason to doubt because the 'little member' is so uncommon tough. He always gives in last ; it is a life-long fight. Besides, according to dear old Crum, oughtn't the new life to creep and walk a little, before we can expect it to *talk* all right ?"

John-Jack stood behind them with dilated eyes. "New life?" "old Christie?" what did it all mean? he could bear it no longer.

"Cousin," said he, solemnly, plucking her by the sleeve. "Cousin, have *you* a John, too?"

They all laughed. "Why that's a capital idea, Jack. Yes, I *do* hope I have a John."

Jack stared.

"But you can't see him, you know."

"O, no," said Jack, with great, troubled eyes, "you can't see *my* John, and I don't know when he came; but he's there, and he's a great deal better than Jack. You would like John."

"Yes, John is a first-rate fellow!" said Christie. "I wish mine were half so good."

## CHAPTER X.

### OPIATES.

“Sept. 25.



MY DEAREST TOM :—Something is troubling me very much, and I want to ask you what you think about it. Such a dreadful thing has happened.

That nice, gentlemanly Mr. Steele, who went in the party with Harvey Davison, has been drowned! The boat tipped over in the middle of the lake, but the rest all saved themselves. They think *he* must have had a cramp, for he went down like lead. Now the terrible part is, that he never seemed to think of sober things at all, and never made any pretensions to being good, and if one believes what Mr. Anthon is preaching every Sunday —! But there must be some mistake. I can think of him now, always so pleasant, with some bright funny thing to say, — it cannot be that he has gone right out of this splendid, happy world, to be miserable forever! It frightens me. It seems wrong for the sun to be shining, and the

flowers looking so innocent and sweet, if there is such dreadful misery somewhere in God's universe. And Tom, I want to tell you what Harvey Davison says. He came back just two days after you left. Such a pity! You would have liked him so much. He is so open-hearted and frank, and I think he is all right too, (about the 'Plan,' you know,) although he has some very peculiar views.

"He must have noticed how unhappy I looked, last Sunday, for he walked home with me, and immediately began talking about Mr. Anthon. He said he was always sorry to see a man, whose ill-health or melancholy temperament, led him to take such gloomy views of the future life, and he said of course it could not trouble *him*, but he was sorry to see it have such an effect on a young, impressible nature like mine. It was wicked to put such thoughts of God in my head.

"And then Tom, he began to say such beautiful things about his father, — I can't tell you as he did, for he talks like a book or a grand poem, — but I am sure it would have brought the tears in your eyes. He acknowledged, beautifully, Tom, that he had sinned, but he couldn't doubt the love of his Father, — he *knew* there was a robe and a ring waiting for him. He

thought it possible, and even probable that the worst people might have to suffer a while, but that it could be *forever*, just for this little time spent in the body, was too absurd to be believed. It would certainly be impossible to love such a revengeful God. And then he repeated a beautiful Oriental apologue, which he had seen somewhere. He wrote it out for me afterwards, and I will copy it for you.

“ ‘ God once sat on his inconceivable throne, and far around him, rank after rank, angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, resting on their silver wings, and lifting their dazzling brows, rose and swelled, with the splendors of a sea of immortal beings, gleaming and fluctuating to the remotest borders of the universe. The anthem of their praise shook the pillars of creation, and filled the vault of heaven, with a pulsing flood of harmony. When, as they closed their hymn, stole up, faint heard, as from some distant region of all space, a responsive, infinitely sad, “ Amen.” God asked Gabriel, “ Whence comes that Amen ? ” The hierarchal peer replied, “ It rises from the lost spirits in hell.” God took from where it hung above his seat, the key that unlocks the forty thousand doors of hell, and, giving it to Gabriel, bade him go release them.

On wings of light sped the enraptured messenger, rescued the millions of the lost, and, just as they were, brought them straight up into the midst of Heaven. Instantly they were transformed, and clothed in robes of glory; and henceforth their song of praise was the dearest strain in God's ear, of all the celestial music. And, because there is no envy or other selfishness in Heaven, this promotion sent but new thrills of delight and gratitude through the heights and depths of angelic life.'

"Now Tom, isn't that touching and perfectly beautiful? It seems just what one might expect from a God of Love. He quoted something else, too, to show that this idea is shared by the greatest minds in all ages."

"'God himself prays,' (this is from the Talmud.) 'He prays, "Be it my will that my mercy overpower my justice."' "

"Now that does seem so beautiful and natural, — as if it certainly must be true: I have felt a great deal happier ever since. But I would like to know what *you* think about it. You must write and tell me the very first thing you do. I would talk to mother: but I don't like to bother her. Besides, she is just as much prejudiced as ever against Harvey. It seems strange

when she is so kind to other people who are not happy, and he is always so sad and interesting. He says, with regard to the world and life, he feels an 'undying distrust, an immortal weariness.' I remember the very words, — they were so unusual, — so like Byron, I thought. But when I told mother, she only quoted,

" 'Lives spent in indolence, and *therefore* sad.' "

"Now the truth of the case is, that Harvey's health will not allow him to devote himself to any thing, and this is a very great trial to him ; he has often told me so. It is hard that in addition, he should be misunderstood by such good people as mother.

"I am having some trials of my own, too, Tom. The girls are all going to begin the French lessons next week, and papa has positively refused to let me join them. Such a great disappointment ! and they all think it is so strange. I don't know what excuse to make. Papa has been very low-spirited lately ; but I do not think he is well. I know he will feel better just as soon as the profits come in from the salt-works. I watch every letter that comes, hoping he will say, — ' Ah, here is the dividend at last.' Then, perhaps, he will change his mind about the French. It is so hard to have them all get

ahead of me. Harvey Davison speaks it as if he had been born in Paris.

"We do not see much of Mr. Greyson lately, he has been so very busy. He has just made a grand speech in that Morrill case, and won the suit. The papers are full of his praises, and the girls all like him better than they did. Harvey Davison too, thinks him a young lawyer of great promise, and, — he has seen so much of the world, — his praises are worth something, you know. I wish he had a little more polish, however. Yesterday, (things always must happen so contrary,) both the gentlemen came at the same time, to ask me to drive. I didn't know what to do, for, of course, I was too polite to show any preference. But Mr. Greyson began to smile in that provoking way, and taking my hand, just helped me into Harvey's wagon. I suppose the fact was, it made no difference to *him*; it was all the same whether he took me or Aunt Hopper, but I think he would have been more gentlemanly to pretend to care a little.

"You asked about John-Jack. I have about given up teaching him to read, he is such a bother; his very devotion to me makes him more annoying. He wants to follow me everywhere like a dog. Dump is carrying on his

education now, which is a far better arrangement, as she seems to enjoy it, and it was getting more and more a trial to me. He has been rather unhappy with all the rest of us lately. I think he must have heard me talking. He has been sitting on the wood-pile all the afternoon, mourning to himself. He doesn't give any more of those howls, since I spoke to him; but I know he is aching to. This is what he keeps saying :

“ ‘Poor Jack ! *he* can never get to Heaven. Jack is too wicked. Poor Jack ! ’

“ Dump went out to comfort him a little while ago.

“ ‘But *John* will go, you know,’ she said.

“ ‘Then he only sobbed harder than ever.

“ ‘Yes, but I'm sorry for Jack. I wish Jack could have a little bit of Heaven too.’

“ I know just how he feels Tom. Mother has been having one of her serious talks with me to-day. She says I have been so excitable and thoughtless lately, and haven't done half so much, as usual, for the happiness of others. The fact is, I am very tired of my John, and there isn't anything I'd do more cheerfully than plan a little happiness for the old Christie. I know just how that sounds, but it's *true*, and I may as well come out with it. There is so much in life so

sweet — *so* sweet ! and *one* could be so happy in this beautiful world, if it weren't for thinking of serious things all the time. I have about made up my mind to let my John go a little while, and devote myself to my Jack.

“ You wont know what to think of me, Tom. I don't know what to think of myself. I am up and down all the time —

“ ‘ With tidal moments of devoutest awe,  
Sinking anon, to furthest ebb of doubt.’

“ But if I do not always make the highest choice — if there is a little mistake now and then — I cannot help believing that this glorious loving Father will pity and forgive me, and be ready to welcome me home at last. Don't you think so Tom ?

“ Yours, Trulissime,

“ CHRISTIE-JOHN HAMMOND.”

“ P. S. You will be very much astonished to hear that Christina talks of joining the church. I never was more surprised in my life, although I had seen her having a great many talks with Mr. Greyson and Mr. Anthon, lately. She does so enjoy being important ; and the other evening, when she came in to talk with mother, she said so much about the angels rejoicing over her, that

you couldn't help seeing that she felt herself of more consequence than any ninety-nine of the old church members, Mr. Anthon included. She acts as if she were the one missing piece of silver, and the whole church and universe had been lighting candles, and sweeping up, to look for her.

"There, Tom, how wicked I am! I ought to tear that out, but I won't. It was in my heart, and I would rather 'fess' every thing, and then see if you can love me one bit; or whether you think it possible that God can."

*Tom to Christie,*

"Whatever hobby you ride, you thoroughly, bad Kriss, you must always go at full gallop, and any one must hurry who means to overtake you. So I am not losing a moment to post after, and tell you I am pretty sure you have gone over a fence, and got in a wrong road.

"I am not very brilliant, and I do not know that I could argue at all with your wonderful Harvey Davison, but there are two or three things I would like to have him explain. First about *Judas*. You know who said, 'it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.' Now if it were possible that after thousands or

even millions of years, he could at last drag himself through the gates into the city, — that couldn't be true, could it? There would still be an eternity of happiness before him.

“That was a beautiful little story you sent me. I would give all the world to believe it, but I don't dare. It seems as if He who came direct from the Father's house, — to tell us what was best for us to know, — taught so very differently. Don't think that is only *my* opinion. I talked with our Greek Professor about it to-day, and he said that the great Theodore Parker, and T. Star King too, confessed that this beautiful theory of the final salvation of all souls couldn't find a foundation in any of the discourses or words of Christ. Perhaps, though, Harvey Davison is better authority.

“But Christie, even supposing that he is right about the *end*, you say he admits that there may be some suffering first, and I'll tell you what would trouble *me*. We would think it a dreadful thing to have our eye cut out, or to lose our right hand, but if our Elder Brother (who *knew*) said that this would be better than even to run any risk of such punishment, — the suffering must be terrible. I don't believe I could bear even one year of it. And these same Orientals,

I think, had an illustration of the great period that *might* pass before one is finally saved. They say :

“ ‘ A small yoke is thrown into the ocean, and borne about in every direction by various winds. Once in a hundred thousand years a blind tortoise rises to the surface of the water. When the time comes that the tortoise shall so rise up that its neck shall enter the hole of the yoke, then may the end come, and the unhappy soul hope to pass through the fiery gates.’ ”

“ But the fact is, Christie, I don't like to talk much about these things. We don't understand them, and it is better to let them alone. It seems almost like daring to criticise this great God. We are not to tell Him what is right. He tells *us*, and I like that a great deal better for my part. I am sure every thing will be just right in the end ; and in the meantime I think it is better and safer to live as if the worst were true.

“ Let me know about your experiment with your ‘ Jack.’ I'm afraid you won't make much by it. You may depend, Christie, it is a great saving of trouble to take the Inventor's word. Every time *my* John chooses, my Jack is happiest in the end.

"That was very funny about Christina ; it brought her so right up before me, I couldn't keep from laughing. So, you see, I can't scold you. If I don't say such things myself, I'm afraid it is only because I don't *think* of them, not that I am too good. Still, Christie, I guess it would be as well to count the cracked panes in our own glass houses, and that would keep us so busy, we wouldn't have much time to throw stones at any body."

*Christie to Tom.*

"DEC. 16.

"Dear old fellow, you are right, and 'I am wrong, as your Honor always is.' I have been very unwilling to admit it, and it has taken me a long time, as you see. But here I am, come to confession, at last ; and I want to tell you all about it, and how my eyes finally came wide open. Prepare for a long story.

"The Houghtons had a grand party last week, and I went to it, of course. Such a time as I had getting ready ! Mother, you know, is making her visit at Aunt Susan's, with Fred and the baby and Nancy ; and I had all the house-keeping on my mind, besides, — as papa wouldn't give me a cent, — I had to wash and iron, and make over

my old Swiss muslin, all by myself. I never should have gotten through, if it hadn't been for Jack, who did all the sweeping and dusting, and ran errands for me from morning till night. Poor fellow! it was so hard at last. I never dreamed of his taking it into his poor confused head that he was going too. But when Mr. Greyson and Mrs. Fellowes stopped for me, there he was, all ready to step into the carriage. He had on the same old every-day clothes, only with the addition of the little scarlet bow I made him, and *your* gloves, of course. He has the queerest idea about that bow, which is only taken out of the cotton on state occasions. No matter how short the summons from stable or garden, if he only has time to put on that bit of ribbon, he seems to consider himself in full dress, and fit to be presented at court. It was very hard to disappoint him, when he stood there nodding and chuckling, with his poor hair parted forty different ways; but it had to be done. He was perfectly broken-hearted; and all I could say, he would persist in laying all the blame of it to Mr. Greyson.

"But O, Tom, how enchanting it was at the Houghtons! I don't know how I could bear it, if we shouldn't be rich some time. The great

splendid house was thrown all open, and you looked down long vistas of rooms, all light and perfume, and flowers, and filled with beautifully dressed people. And then you could wander off into quieter rooms, if you pleased, — rooms where there were paintings and statuary, — and look at the beautiful white, dreamy figures, or the wonderful madonnas and angels, by the old masters. It was so pleasant to look at them all with such an intelligent companion as Harvey Davison. He has seen every thing you know, and talks about Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Titian, as if they had all been to school together. I hardly dared admire any thing for fear of showing my ignorance. I know so very little; but he doesn't seem to think any the less of me for it. Once, when I asked him to tell me what he considered most worthy of admiration, in the whole collection, he led me to the end of the long gallery, and suddenly pausing, said,

“ ‘This, Miss Hammond, in *my* opinion, surpasses anything to be seen in the old world.’

“ And what do you think, Tom? we were only standing before a long mirror! Now I am afraid you will think that very foolish, but he seemed so sorry the minute it was out. He said the fault was my own after all. I was like that old tem

ple of Truth, which no one could approach, without being forced to tell just what was in his mind.

"But this is not at all what I was going to tell you. I may as well come to it.

"The Houghtons had a band from the city, and the music was perfectly intoxicating. When the first crash came I thought my heart would jump out of my body. They played an air exquisitely sweet and sad at first, and although nobody else seemed to mind it, it excited me wonderfully. I could only think of those lines—

"O, cease ye wild horns, I am dying!  
If ye wail so, my heart it will break."

"Then, all of a sudden they changed into something so lively and inspiriting, it was quite impossible to keep one's feet still. Everybody was taking a partner for waltzing. I refused very decidedly, at first, because mother doesn't like it, you know. But Harvey urged it so very much, — and he is so different from other gentlemen, so very kind, and wants me to consider him my brother, while you are away, — I didn't know what to say. I think I must have been seized finally with what the doctors now call '*volitional* insanity.' I knew it was wrong, but

I had no control ever my *will*. Mr. Greyson whispered, 'I wouldn't, Christie.' But I just said, 'Do let me, grandmother,' and he didn't say any more. The first thing I knew I was floating off and off, with that splendid music in throbbing little waves under my feet — up, and down — it didn't seem as if I once touched the floor.

"I don't remember much about the rest of the evening; it is all one confusion of splendor and delight. I am afraid I danced several times. And I didn't see Mr. Greyson but once again, and that was when I was trying to get a breath by an open window, and he was so stupid as to bring Mrs. Fellowes' horrid yellow and purple shawl, and throw it over my pretty puffs and ruffles. I wasn't ready to come home, either, when he and Mrs. Fellowes left, so Mrs. Davison offered to take me in *her* carriage, and that was all pleasantly arranged.

"Lu came in to stay all night with me, and we were both about half crazy. We sat up till nearly morning, talking it over, like Maud and Madge, who —

" — sat and combed their beautiful hair,  
Their long bright tresses one by one,  
As they laughed and talked in their chamber there,  
After the revel was done."

"All that was very sweet, but now I must come to the bitter. Christina was there too, but very quiet; she hardly received any attention at all, although she had a new tarlatan, and a pink silk overskirt. Wasn't that splendor? Lu says, Aunt Hopper gave her twenty dollars towards it. If she had only given me *ten*, I could have set the Empress Eugenie crazy. You know I have learned to make a little go a great way.

"But I shall never get to the point. This morning Lu came in to tell me Christina had been talking shamefully about me. She has been up telling Aunt Hopper all about it, and she told Lu that no one who was a Christian could possibly do such things as I did. It might be ignorance, on my part, but it was ignorance beyond *her* comprehension. She said too, that I had been making a great show of bridling my tongue, lately, and trying to be kind and obliging, but it was only another case of people tithing mint and anise and cummin, and omitting the weightier matters of the law. And then she told Lu that of course it required courage and strength of character to turn away from these fascinating amusements, but it could be done; she was glad that there were some noble Christian girls, even in our most fashionable circles, who had set their

faces against it like a flint. Then, finally Tom, she finished up by saying, that of course I had given up praying for a *revival* this winter.

“What do you think of that? Wasn’t it enough to make one angry to be called hypocritical, and weak, and ignorant past comprehension? And wasn’t it dreadful to go and talk it over with Aunt Hopper? She was just thawing out a little, lately, — there were some indications of spring, but now we are back in mid-winter. I always pay so very high for my whistles. And then about giving up praying — O, Tom, I did feel very hard indeed! And just on the impulse of the moment, I couldn’t help telling Lu just what I thought. I said that, as when people looked through colored glass, red, green, or yellow, every thing they saw, would be red, green, or yellow, so those who looked through their own passions, were sure to see others of the same color as themselves. Christina was so well aware of her own frailties, that she was always ready, on very small appearances, to imagine other people as bad as herself. ‘We weigh our neighbors in our own scales. A robber believes every one to be a thief.’ And then I read her something that a very good man said about rash and hasty judgments.

“ ‘They proceed from envy, jealousy, or some secret aversion ; for, as we easily believe what we would have, so, where we have a dislike, we find something to blame in all they do, and interpret all their actions in the worst sense. Our judgments are very different where we *love* ; so that it is commonly said, “Some had better steal than others look over the hedge.” ’

“I am afraid I said a great deal more about Christina being always envious and malicious, — I hardly remember what ; but I know that dear old nurse Crum, — who came in just as Lu was leaving, — looked very sorry, and tried to stop me. When Lu was gone, she had a long talk, and found a great deal of fault with me. But she did it as if she loved me, and that made it almost as sweet as praise. She said I had been doing the very same thing I condemned in Christina, and that only very young, feeble Christians talked as we did, — those who hadn’t yet learned the language of *love*. And she said I would find that the better one grew, the gentler and kindlier would be his judgments, till, at last, if I met a person *eminent* for holiness, I would find him so full of pity and love, and so busy finding excuses for those who go astray, that he would scarcely have any time for condemnation.

"She acknowledged that Christina did 'come down' in a very provoking way; but then I surely deserved part of it; and, as for the rest, she said if we would only remember that when people are bitter and ill-tempered, they have so much the worst of it themselves, — how uncomfortable they must be with all those bad thoughts in their hearts, — we would be more sorry than angry.

"And then she drew a little book out of her pocket, and read *me* something.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. 'How great is God's goodness to put our judgment into our own hands, and engage himself not to enter into judgment with us, provided we judge not others.'"

"That frightens me a little, Tom. If I can only think of it at the right time, it will always shut me right up.

"But you will think that Mr. Anthon's mantle, overcoat, big cane, and library, have all fallen upon me. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. I have found out two things."

"First. I have been giving my Jack a long trial, and I have proved that letting him *choose*, doesn't make happiness certain, by any means.

"Second. It may be a horrible meanness to

confess, but my Jack — the old Christie — needs the fear of *punishment*, or she will never give up. I don't think that expresses just what I mean. When I was a little child, and did some naughty thing, it was not the whipping, or shutting up, that I dreaded most, but the way mother would *look*. And this is what I need now — the fear of the *displeasure* of God. That is not an unworthy motive is it?

“But, you see, if all is true, that I have tried so hard to believe, then sin is not of much consequence after all. God doesn't hate it so very much; it is foolish to make such an ado, and to struggle so hard against it. Every thing will come all right in the end, and the good and the bad be happy together. So the whole standard is lowered, and, at last, one ceases to struggle at all. At least, Tom, that is the way it works with any one so mean as I.

“My ‘John’ hasn't grown at all, lately. Mrs. Crum says I have been like the bad nurses who give their babies, anodynes. I have been giving my poor feeble John, a kind of moral soothing syrup. He has been very quiet, hasn't troubled me, in the least, but he has pined and dwindled miserably. He shall be first now. I have made up my mind to give up every thing

to him, but I am afraid it will take him a long time to recover. He acts as if some of his limbs were paralyzed.

"Another thing, Tom; I have written out something, and pinned it up by the glass.

"'If any girl among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not her tongue, that girl's religion is *vain*.'

"I'll let you know if it does any good.

"Yours, sorrowfully,

"CHRISTIE-JOHN HAMMOND."

## CHAPTER XL

### A GREAT MATTER.



It was a dim, snowy February morning, and Christie, slowly picking her way up to Aunt Hopper's, was not at all in her usual spirits. Every thing had seemed to go wrong that morning. Her father, more gloomy than usual, had only swallowed a cup of coffee at breakfast, and then pushed back his plate with every thing untasted.

"I shall know certainly, before night," she heard him say, as he went out, leaving her mother very sad and absent-minded.

John and Jack, too, had been on the worst of terms since daybreak, on account of some paths to be shovelled. But John had conquered, as he almost always did, and Jack was bending to the work manfully.

And this had suggested to Christie's John, that she ought to be taking Aunt Hopper the

pair of worsted boots she had been knitting her so long. They were to have been done for Christmas.

"But, better late than never," said Christie, encouraging herself on the way. "There will be many a cold day yet before spring."

She walked very briskly, anxious to escape the biting wind ; but when she, at last, entered Aunt Hopper's sitting-room, she had a strange feeling that the rawness and chilliness had not all been left outside. A little mental shiver gave prophetic warning that there was discomfort, perhaps even *danger*, at hand ; and all the pleasant speeches she had meant to make—little sails to be spread in case of a favoring breeze—were quickly reefed in preparation for a storm.

Christina, as so often before, was already there before her, and was sitting very cosily with Aunt Hopper, with a bit of crochet in her hand. She had evidently been there some time.

The morning salutations were exchanged in the fewest possible words, and then silence fell upon them all. Aunt Hopper's old clock could be plainly heard ticking away in a kind of low-spirited fashion it had ; it always seemed clean

discouraged, Christie thought, that time *would* trickle away from it so fast — drip — drip — there really was no use in trying to hold up its hands. Drip — drip. Would nobody ever speak? Christie began to be nervous.

"Aunt Hopper," she said timidly, "I have been knitting a pair of worsted boots —"

"I am glad you have been so well employed," said Aunt Hopper, without raising her eyes.

"And I thought," continued Christie, desperately, "that I would like to give them to you — that is, I made them on purpose for you."

"*Very* kind;" returned Aunt Hopper, "but you have brought your coals to Newcastle; Christina gave me a pair last week."

"Why, Christina!" began Christie, indignantly. "You *knew* I was knitting those for Aunt Hopper. I told you."

Christina colored a little. "I knew you had begun them, but you got along so slowly — I thought perhaps she could wear out a pair of mine, before yours would be ready."

"You didn't think any thing of the kind," cried impetuous Christie. "You knew these were almost done a fortnight ago, and you

must have worked day and night just to disappoint me. I think it was a very underhand —”

“There Christina Hammond, that will do,” said Aunt Hopper, sternly. “Your tongue has enough sins to answer for, without adding any more to the number. We must all look out for you now. The wise man says: ‘A serpent will bite, and a babbler is no better,’ but I never knew they would bite their best friends.” Aunt Hopper stopped to wipe her eyes.

“But they will have their reward. ‘Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles,’ but she that *doesn't* —” Aunt Hopper nodded with terrible significance. “You are a bright girl, Christina, but flattery has ruined you. You have such pride that you no longer respect any body, no matter how good or far above you they may be. ‘Their tongue walketh through the earth,’ says David, — seeking whom it may devour.”

A little glimmer upon Christie's face apprised Aunt Hopper that she had finished her quotation with more force than accuracy.

“Very well, Christina Hammond. But I think you will find this quoted right. ‘The lips of a

fool will swallow up himself.' And you will have plenty of proof that it is true."

"Aunt Hopper," cried Christie, in despair, "what *have* I done? I'm sure there's some mistake."

"No mistake. It has always been inside, and now it has only come outside—you are fair and pleasant to look upon, child, but you are an apple of Sodom, all ashes within."

Christie was too much shocked at this alarming statement, to even ask how the fact had been ascertained. But it was very clear that something unusual had happened. "There is no smoke without some fire," she thought to herself, "and this is very black smoke, indeed." Still she could not imagine where the fire would break forth. She was quite bewildered. But Aunt Hopper proceeded in the work of enlightenment.

"We might not have found out what was in you, in a long time, but you have been your own worst enemy; your own tongue has made haste to tell it. You have been busy calling your cousin Christina, malicious and envious, when you, yourself—"

"Never mind that, Aunt," said Christina Winter, rising hastily, "I think I must be going."

"Sit right down," said the imperative old lady. "You must stay to dinner. I won't say any more about that. I will come to the head and front of the offending. We have heard at last, Christina Hammond," her voice grew tremulous, "what are your true feelings towards your poor Uncle Hopper and me. Don't look at your cousin. The thing wasn't done in a corner—a hundred people could have told me. To think of your daring to attack a man like your Uncle Hopper! To be sure, though, 'if you wish to hang yourself, choose a big tree.'" Aunt Hopper quite broke down, but went on, in a minute. "Such a devout heavenly-minded man! Many and many a one has said to me that they could never hear him in an evening meeting, without thinking of Paul. But you—*you*,—little foolish, Christina Hammond,—think he is about as interesting as Mr. Houghton's millwheel! So you would like to hang him, would you? You don't think they will want to call him up higher in a hurry, eh? Do you think they will ever want to call *you*?"

Christie had not a word to say. The flames were bursting forth; she was dismayed at the extent of the conflagration.

"Your Uncle had noticed a lack of interest lately, when he spoke," said Aunt Hopper, plaintively; "it even crossed his humble mind that there might be some one that thought his speech contemptible, but we never dreamed of *you*. To think of all his kindness to you from a little child, — how he has given you sticks of candy without number, which you were glad enough to eat, — and all the time the poor man was only carrying a viper in his bosom!"

This vision of herself, Christie, in Uncle Hopper's bosom, and under the brilliant figure of a viper eating sticks of candy, — was too much even at this overwhelming moment. Christie broke into a little hysterical, ill-timed chuckle. This sealed her fate. Aunt Hopper sat up stiffly putting all weakness behind her.

"It is all an excellent joke, no doubt. I hope you will continue to enjoy the rest that I have to say. You have a very good head for figures, I hear. Let me see, — it is worth a dollar to pick up my snuff-box, and from twenty-five to fifty cents to bring me a foot-stool. Is that right? I'm afraid these calculations must have given you a great deal of

trouble. Did you ever add them all up? If so, I would like to settle with you, if it doesn't come too high."

"Oh, Aunt Hopper," cried Christie finding her tongue, at last. "I never said it just in that way, *never!* I only meant that some people thought so, but I—"

Aunt Hopper waved her hand. "And I only mean that you needn't trouble yourself any more to do me a favor; you needn't be coming up every other day to inquire after my health. From this time forth, it will have no interest for you; you won't be a bit better off at my death. You are your father's own child; you have both swallowed up yourselves. I made him a promise once, when you were born, but a foolish promise is better broken than kept. I have made up my mind. Listen Christina, I have sent for Mr. Greyson to alter my will, I shall not leave you one cent!"

"I have thought you wouldn't this great while," said Christie through her tears. But I don't care for that. I only care because you think I am so horribly mean. It is dreadful to misrepresent me so!"

"Didn't you say that about your Uncle Hopper?" quavered the old lady, looking

anxiously at Christie. She had truly a liking for the frank, straightforward girl ; she would still have been glad to hear something in her defence.

"Yes, I did," admitted Christie, desperately, "but it was before I began to try, — I wouldn't say such things *now*. I have been very sorry and ashamed. Of course, in the sight of God, Uncle Hopper is a great deal better than I am."

"I should hope so!" exclaimed Aunt Hopper. "That's the very smallest praise that could be given him."

This was discouraging ; she had only added fuel to the flame. She arose to go ; but first she turned to Christina.

"You have done a good morning's work," said she, quietly.

"Take care!" cried Aunt Hopper.

"What do you mean?" asked Christina, looking up with a crimsoned face.

"Mean?" repeated Christie, looking from one to the other with an air of surprise. "Why Christina has made nearly a yard of trimming ; it would take me all day to make as much. What else *could* I mean?"

"You are a dangerous girl, Christina," said Aunt Hopper, despairingly.

Christie went out without another word, but got no farther than the back piazza, when she fell into violent conflict with her "John," which resulted in her turning back again.

"Aunt Hopper," she cried, appearing again at the door, "I truly am very, *very* sorry. Do try to believe it. And I wish—I wish you would let me come and see you once in a while, now that you know I haven't any *motive*. May I?"

In the warmth of the good impulse she drew nearer, she even knelt down, and took the old, withered hand. "I shall never expect any thing, you know."

"You would have made a splendid actress, Christie," murmured Christina.

Aunt Hopper drew her hand away. "You will do as you choose, I suppose," said she, peevishly; she was getting tired. "You always did. I am sure I wish you well. If you are truly sorry, and wish to do better, go home, and learn the third chapter of James, by heart."

"No one knows how I have studied it already," said Christie humbly, "I know a great many

things by heart. This is a good verse, Aunt Hopper.—” She stood before them with earnest eyes and flaming cheeks and repeated slowly,—

“‘Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle?  
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? \* \* \* \*  
He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor  
doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a re-  
proach against his neighbor.’ Good-bye, Aunt  
Hopper.” And Christie was gone in her usual  
abrupt fashion.

Christina Winter hurried after her

“I know what you think, Christie, but I want to tell you just how it happened. You see Lu Davison walked up with me this morning, and though she told me some things about which I had a very good right to be angry, as you know,—I never would have revenged myself in such a way as this. The truth is, Aunt Hopper happened to overhear one or two things we were saying, and when she charged me with them afterwards, I couldn’t deny them. You know I must always tell the truth. I told her you meant it all in fun. Now Christie, do wait a minute;” for Christie was at the gate. “It is too bad for you to accuse me of such meanness.”

"Why *I* haven't said a word," said Christie, looking back with a smile that nearly drove Christina frantic ; and she hurried away before the enemy could make any change of base.

But what a world of treachery it was ! How she had confided in her dear friend Lu, and Lu had gone straight to Christina, and Christina, excited and angry, had betrayed her to Aunt Hopper. How perfectly disheartening every thing was ! And the worst sting of all was that there was no one to be blamed more heartily than herself. It was hard though, to have these old forgotten sins sweep down so suddenly upon her. Who could have supposed those few careless words could have made so much trouble. But words are great powers for good and evil ; once spoken, there is no knowing where their influence is to end. Christie remembered sorrowfully what Tom said about the "little fire." It had been smouldering a long time, but now it had suddenly burst into the "great matter." She didn't like to think how many pleasant things might shrivel away in the flames.

Was there any thing to comfort her ? Yes, a very little. That very morning she had been able to control herself a little ; she had not answered as she would have done a few months ago.

She had been very angry, but she had *said* very little. "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." That was something. John had proved that he was alive.

But what would her father and mother say, when they heard all the story of her imprudence, her worse than folly, and Aunt Hopper's dreadful decision? O, it was more to be hoped than ever, that there would be good news from the salt-works; if *that* were only all right, her father wouldn't care.

"And of course, it *will* be," she concluded more cheerfully, "because papa said he had put the whole matter in Fellowes' and Greyson's hands, and they can always make any thing turn out just as they please."

As she came to this satisfactory conclusion, she heard a well-known, shambling trot, and descried John-Jack coming to meet her. She was not greatly pleased, for they were just opposite the Davisons, and she was conscious of a group in the window—Belle and Harvey and Lu. They were all laughing, and Christie could almost hear the false Lu saying "There go Christie and her admirer."

"Why *do* you follow me so Jack?" she cried, impatiently.

Jack was greatly abashed. "Uncle is home," he volunteered timidly.

"What! papa home, at this hour of the day?" cried Christie, diverted to a new anxiety. "What is the matter? Is he sick?"

But Jack, dropping into a dejected trot behind her, had no more information to offer. They soon reached the gate, and Jack looked at her wistfully as he held it open; he had been thinking all the morning how she would notice the broad, smooth path, and say, "Good Jack. Nobody shovels paths like Jack." But she hurried by without a word.

"What is it, papa?" she cried, bursting into the sitting-room to find him lying on the sofa, with her mother bending over him.

"One of his bad headaches," said her mother gently, "he will be over it in a little while."

"No, Christie," said her father with a groan, "It is a bad *heart-ache*, and I never will be over it."

"Is it the salt-works?" asked Christie, with a quick instinct. "Won't they make any dividend this year?"

"If that were only all!" cried her father. "No, Christie, *every thing* is gone! We have lost all our little property."

Christie looked incredulous ; she was used to her father's extravagant expressions. She turned to her mother, inquiringly.

"Of course, that can't be quite so bad. The salt-works can't run away ; they must be worth something !"

"It was all a great mistake," said her mother, sadly. "They found it cost more to manufacture and transport the salt, than it would bring when they got it to market."

Christie was quite overwhelmed at first ; but her nature was very elastic.

"Papa," said she after a while, beginning to pat his cheek, "we won't be so very unhappy after all. We have our dear little home—"

"No, that is just what we *haven't*," he interrupted quickly. "Ah, I have been such a fool ! The rich men will come out all right, no doubt, but all we poor silly fishes that *would* bite at their hook, must be drained of our last drop of blood. Scamps as they are ! And the law can't touch 'em. It is dreadful !"

"The company is heavily in debt, Christie," explained her mother. "Your father not only loses all he put in, but, — the stockholders are liable for the debts, — he must sell the house,

or perhaps mortgage it up to nearly its full value before he can settle the matter."

"That suggests an idea," said her father, sitting up in his quick, eager way. "Perhaps Aunt Hopper would take a mortgage, or perhaps she would do something for us out and out. How was she this morning, Christie? I am so glad you went up. Go right back again, without taking off your hat. Tell her all about it; you have a coaxing way when you try. I never could get on with her, but it's such a good thing that she's so fond of you. And the poor, nervous, harassed face twitched into something like a smile.

It was impossible for Christie to bear this climax of wretchedness alone; her full heart ran over, and in a few vivid words she unfolded the story of the morning's disaster.

Her father sank back, with his hand to his head. "Yes, that is over! She is an unforgiving old woman. It was my only hope. Christie, bring me a sheet of paper. I must write for Tom to come home immediately; and call Bridget and Nancy,—they must be dismissed this very day. It isn't honorable to be spending money that isn't your own. And have a care of that dress, Christie, I don't know when

you will ever get another. O, child, you have done a dreadful thing !”

“Run away, dear,” whispered her mother, as Christie sobbed violently. “Your father is very tired and nervous. We will talk it over by and by. Perhaps it won’t be so bad.”

“Papa, can’t you say you forgive me, first ?” implored poor Christie. “If you could only see how sorry I am ! I know I did very wrong—”

“That doesn’t help the matter any,” said her father, greatly excited. “Take the Bible, Christie. Turn to the fifth chapter of Ecclesiastes, and read the sixth verse.”

Christie obeyed, as well as she could for her tears, and read —

“Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin ; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error ; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice ?”

“That is it,” said her father. “He has been angry with both of us. Yes, Christie. He has shown it to-day. God has been *angry* with your voice.”

“O, father !” cried Christie, looking frightened. “Don’t say that ! Any thing but that.”

But her mother kissed her, and put her gently out of the room.

Blinded with tears, she stumbled against some one in the dimly-lighted hall.

"I am so very sorry about this matter," began a voice.

"O, Mr. Greyson," cried impetuous Christie. "Why *did* you let it happen? I should like to know what lawyers are good for, if they can't save people from such trouble as this. I thought you were such a friend!"

"I have done every thing in my power, Miss Christie," he said soberly. "Mortal man could not do more."

"I had such faith in you!" she persisted; and breaking away from his detaining hand, she ran to lock herself in her room, the most unreasonable, most unhappy little heart in Millburgh.

## CHAPTER XII.

JOHN CREEPS.

"JULY 15.



DEAREST OLD TOM :

"I haven't written you in a great while, because I haven't had the heart for any thing. But since you are turning out so brave and plucky, — teaching and working, and going on with your education without being a burden to any body, — I am getting a little ashamed. Girls can have spirit and 'snap' as well as boys. I have made up my mind to do something to help ; and I want to tell you my plans. I hope to make every one forget how shamefully I acted when the trouble first came. It was so miserable to give up the music and French, and new dresses, and every thing that is so sweet and pleasant to girls, and go into one of Uncle Hopper's dingiest spheres. Yes, I was very bad and impatient and rebellious. Mother says, every thing proved that my 'John's' pa-

(172)

ralysis was more alarming than I thought, and, — as souls don't suffer much with that malady, — I should probably never have done any thing for him till it was too late. But she says, that some one who loved me a great deal better than I did myself, saw just what medicine I needed, and sent it. Maybe that's so, Tom, but it is very hard to take. I think I could have borne some kind of a surgical operation better,—one sharp, dreadful pang, and then all over. But *this* is to be taken every day, poverty and humiliation in equal quantities, — I make a great fuss swallowing it. But mother says, she thinks it has saved John's life.

“Now what do you think I have done to-day? Swept and dusted all upstairs, washed baby, and put him to sleep, heard Jack's lessons, made biscuits for tea, and darned a barrel full of stockings. That last statement may be slightly figurative. But the *old* Christie could never have done all that. She was always so pressed for time, she could hardly get through with her own business. You see I know her. She was a snarling, fault-finding selfish creature. Not that she is entirely dead and buried yet, Tom. Uncle Hopper talks about ‘crucifying the old man,’ and I've done my best with her. There is never

a lack of a cross in these days. Such a time as I had, only last Sunday ! I don't know how boys feel about their coats and neckties, but that wretched old Christie would rather have had a fit of illness than go to church in her old piqué, and the shabby gloves she had mended the night before. I was firm with her. I nailed her tight to that cross before breakfast — ' why should our garments meant to hide,' etc. But she would not stay put ; she was down again before the bells rung, and fought my poor John so that she almost kept him home. He *went* though.

" I have plenty of time to think over all these things, Tom, for I haven't been much troubled with company, lately. The girls are all interested in so many things that I cannot share just now. Besides I may have been a little cool to some of them. Christina and I never could have been mistaken for Damon and Pythias, you know ; and as for Lu, — how can I ever put any confidence in her again ? She is so good-natured and unconscious, though, when we meet ; she doesn't seem to have the slightest suspicion of having done any thing out of the way. She hasn't any more conscience than our old cat who after she had eaten that nest of young robins, came, just as usual, to purr, and rub her wicked

old fur against me. I hope it isn't wrong to say that.

"Harvey, too, hasn't been here in a great while. Lu says he isn't well, and hardly goes anywhere; *but* ——

("The old Christie and John have been fighting about which should have my tongue, and when they do that, I don't give it to either of them. So you will never see the end of that sentence.")

"Sometimes I think, Tom, that I may have been too near some 'blacking-bottle,' that has lost its cork, or that never *had* a cork. But maybe not. One very probable reason why I do not see as much of Harvey, is, that I am not so attractive as usual, myself. I do not look at all stylish in my old piqué and muslins, and you know he is refined to fastidiousness in the matter of a lady's dress.

"But do not think I am fretting, Tom, about this, or any thing else. I am very cheerful now, and scarcely ever cry, especially since I have forbidden John-Jack the luxury. We are all trying to be happy, and cheer up poor papa, who has been nearly crazy. We are very careful not to worry him. He has been more quiet since Mr. Bell took the mortgage on the house,

and we got that wretched business all settled. It is so pleasant that we need not leave the dear old home just yet, though papa will insist that the time must come sooner or later ; he never can get it free again. All this has driven me to my plan. You know how I disappointed papa, — he said one dreadful thing to me that I never can forget, — and I feel as if I never could be quite happy unless I could make some atonement — unless I could lift some of that heavy load off his shoulders.

“ So I am going to make money, Tom, lots of it. You are dying to know how. Just to save your life I'll tell you, but you mustn't breathe it to a soul. I am going to be an authoress ! I shall begin with the magazines which, of course, will offer me fifty dollars a page the first thing, and in a year's time I expect every publisher in the land will be fighting over me. I am writing the articles now, late at night, in the depths of secrecy — ‘*secrecy*’ being my own little room, and ‘*depths*’ represented by a stuffed key-hole, and a blanket up at the window. You know I want it to be a delightful surprise to papa and mamma ; but I tell *you*, because I must have some safety-valve, or I should go up some day, under pressure of some of these brilliant ideas

Aunt Hopper says she would rather have a case of nitro-glycerene in the house than me. None of this flattery turns my head at all. But I must tell you the rest. I am writing three articles — a poem, a sentimental story, and something a little livelier, perhaps *louder*. In fact I am going up to storm Jericho, — that is, the *world*, — public opinion, — whatever you please to call it, — and I am taking a lamp, a pitcher, and a trumpet. Won't you be very proud of me when the walls begin to tumble? All my letters are to be posted in the city, and the answers directed to the care of one of my old school-mates. I never said much about her, but she was such a nice girl — Emma Green, don't you remember her? she turned Brown last Christmas, and went to live in Berlin. I see very plainly now, why she was led to such a step; it makes it so very convenient for *me*.

“I do so want to show you what I have written! The old Christie can't be reconciled to your going off in that horrid little country village to teach, instead of coming home this summer. But John — bless him — says, ‘Fiat justitia ruat Christinum.’

“I finished the ‘pitcher’ last night — filled it to the brim, and I do so want somebody to

tell me whether it is milk and water, or nice foamy cider, or plantation bitters, or *what*. The name of the pitcher is, — there, that won't do. I am getting in a dreadful mix. Let me pause to suggest to you that my letter must be an excellent training for your mind, they develop agility; you must learn to be a sort of mental grasshopper, ready at a minute's notice, to jump several times the length of your understanding, off of a metaphor on to the prosiest fact. Now then, the name of my story is, 'Extinct Volcanoes.' How does that strike you? This is the way it begins.

" 'The recital of happiness is always tiresome, but when a bleeding, tortured heart is laid bare, the world will never fail to press eagerly forward and look.'

"You see that cuts up the 'world' handsomely and is something in the Charlotte Bronte style, which is always taking, you know. My hero has a kind of volcanic nature, and he is always yearning, and burning, and rushing after fame and honors and love. But I head him off all the time, because I have a high moral purpose, and know it is for his good. And after he has quite burnt himself out — all his wickedness, and earthly ambitions — I have him turn

into a fertile and beautiful old mountain, at last. I say --

“ ‘Years have passed, the lava streams have ceased to flow ; he is no longer a blazing mountain seen for miles out at sea. “Extinct,” the world says ; but Heaven knows that flowers are springing up in the scarred slopes, where the cloud-angel has lain cool, gray hands in benediction upon the tortured head.’

“There, Tom, that is the idea. Tell me what you think. In any event, I am sure you will never make fun of me. I could tell you about the ‘lamp’ and ‘trumpet,’ but you are tired, and — says Gilpin, ‘so am I.’ Besides, you can tell me what you think of them when you read them in the magazine ! Perhaps, after all, when Christina goes riding out in her carriage, I shall not have to pass her in a wheelbarrow. That is my most familiar vehicle just at present. Jack and I are making a garden together. You don’t know what a help he is, so patient, and ready to work. I have given him the little red Bible I promised him, and it would almost have made you cry to see his delight. He wanted me to write his name in it.

“ ‘Write *Jack*,’ said he, ‘John doesn’t need it ; he is good enough. Give it to poor Jack.’

“ ‘But, I said, ‘Jack is growing so good, I can hardly tell which is which. I shouldn’t wonder if they’d get to be the same person.’

“ ‘You don’t know how wild and frightened he looked. ‘O, no, they are *very* different. Why *John* is going to Heaven.’

“ ‘And Jack, too,’ I said.

“ ‘But he only shook his poor head, and ran away. I see him poring over the little book, every spare moment ; and whenever I snub him — as the old Christie *will* do, now and then, he steals away with good little Dump, and they spell it out together. I think his cough is a little better. You know he has had it ever since the night of the Houghton’s party.’ I never knew till quite lately, that when Mr. Greyson went home, he found the poor fellow hanging on the fence trying to look in at all the splendor. He must have been there all the evening.

“ ‘By the way, Mr. Greyson has not deserted us in our troubles, though that may be because he has had so much business with papa. He has been very kind, however, and on my birthday — you know I was seventeen the first of this month — he gave me a beautiful picture, a copy of Ruben’s ‘Descent from the Cross.’ I have hung it in my own room, just where I can

see it the moment I open my eyes in the morning.

"They say, Tom, that there were two native tribes of Brazil so low in civilization that their very language showed their degradation — they had no word for *thanks*. It has occurred to me lately, that this shameful lack is not at all confined to Brazil — the *angels* must be thinking the very same of *me*. I have never found time to thank God much, either, in words, or the actions that speak louder than words, and I do wish it could be different. I'll tell you what I have done. I have painted a little couplet in illuminated letters, to hang under my beautiful picture — I have read of some one who placed it under a similar painting — and this is it —

" 'This have I done for thee,  
What hast thou done for Me?'

"And, — because I am such a slippery person, and have to hedge myself in, in every way, — I have also made a little book — a kind of an *account* book. In the beginning I have written two wonderful statements — namely :

"1. 'God so loved the world (and Christie Hammond,) that he gave his only begotten Son.'

"2. 'Behold what manner of love . . . that we should be called the Sons of God.'

“ And then I have added —

“ The unspeakable gift! The unspeakable honor! What thanks has Christie Hammond for this ? ’

“ Then, farther on, I have headed the pages alternately ‘ Gratitude,’ ‘ *Ingratitude*,’ and every day I put down a little record, if it is only two lines, it must go down on one side or the other. Tom, you will never know, unless you try, how very little there is to put down on the gratitude side. It almost frightens me, ‘ What hast thou done for me ? ’ The question follows me wherever I go.

“ There is plenty to do if I pleased. You have heard of the great accident up at Houghton’s mills. Five or six men were killed at the explosion, and it will take so long to repair the works, that a great many will be thrown out of employment all summer. Of course there will be a great deal of suffering. Mr. Greyson has done ever so many kind things since it happened; he not only gives the poor people money, but goes to see them, which Aunty Crum says is very unusual in a man with so much business on his hands. But Christina says he works as if it were a kind of expiation — as if he had some sin on his conscience, and couldn’t do enough to

atone for it. I had almost forgotten that old story, and was so sorry that she reminded me of it. There are a great many nice things about Mr. Greyson, and lately I had begun to think, that — in a different way to be sure — he was as worthy of admiration as Harvey Davison. Harvey has not taken much interest in all these poor families, but then he is not well, and he is very busy preparing for his summer tour. Besides I cannot blame any one for not doing such things, I am so unwilling myself. One of the poor women, whose husband was killed, is dying of consumption. Mother goes to see her very often, but when she is too busy I try to take her place. You would laugh to see how awkward I am, and I don't like the business at all. But I am so ashamed when I think of the gratitude-book.

“I am going to a sewing-school, too, to teach poor little children how to make their clothes. Mrs. Fellowes is the president, and O, Tom, I couldn't begin to tell you how much she gives away. Do you remember how we talked about her dress, and called her so mean, that night? I heard lately that her husband gave her a thousand dollars to buy an India shawl, and she preferred to give it to a poor church out West. I don't believe I could have done it. There's

another lesson for my mean old tongue. But I am watching it now. I feel that John's life depends upon it.

"And shall Trelawny die?  
And *must* Trelawny die?  
Then forty thousand Cornish men  
Will know the reason why.'

"The most limited comprehension, will readily understand that 'Trelawny' has the honor of representing my 'John,' and the 'forty thousand' are so many strong — splendidly strong — resolutions.

"One thing more, Tom, and I'll stop. You know there are some days, when you don't have a chance to make any big sacrifice, or do any thing grand, but even then, there needn't be any blanks in my little book. Mr. Anthon told me something so beautiful that he had seen somewhere. The *smallest* acts of patience or self-denial are acceptable to God. He is pleased to have us offer them to Him — bring them 'like little bouquets to lay upon His altar.' Think of that, Tom. Mr. Anthon said, it would be so sweet to bring Him flowers! If one could say, 'Dear Lord, I have had a great trial to-day, but I didn't lose my temper; for Thy sake, to please Thee, I spoke kindly, and now I offer Thee this little flower of patience.'

' I was quite touched with this, and went to see Christina that very night, as the quickest way of getting a flower of some kind. Do you know I sometimes think Christina *has* changed a little. I am not nearly so angry with her as I was at first. I do not think she realized that Aunt Hopper would take it so hard. She acts very sorry and uneasy about it. And then, after all, it was my own tongue that did it. I had a family of very flourishing young hopes, but, like the giant who killed his seven babies, I, myself, cut off all their dear little heads. Will it ever end, do you think Tom? or am I always going to be the unhappy princess,

"SELFIRA?"

*Tom to Christie.*

"O, Kriss, what a letter! I am *not* a grasshopper, and I am so tired jumping about. But I must write-to-night, or I shan't have a chance for three or four days. I have grown a little rusty in some things, I find, and have come to a tough place in the higher mathematics, where I must study like fun, or the boys will find out they know as much as their teacher.

"I always thought you would write, and cover the family with glory, that is, glory in the shape

of dresses and bonnets and shoes, which is a very comfortable way to take it. But — you know I'm nothing if not critical—I think your 'pitcher' is of a little too delicate china. Pshaw! I can't walk on those metaphor stilts if you *can*. What I want to say, is, that it is a little too 'hifalutin' for my taste, and I shouldn't wonder if I would like the 'trumpet' better.

"What a curious girl you are, Kriss! What do *you* know about bleeding and tortured hearts? Maybe you do, though, and I suppose girls like that kind of writing. *Boys* like snap, and pitch, in stories, with a 'Whatever may befall me, Here's a 'heart for any fate,' kind of people in them. Heroes that have to keep their eyes looking out so sharp, they never have any time to waste them in a handkerchief. But it is all better than *I* can do, which, of course you will see is high and generous praise. You didn't tell me where you was going to send them. Strike high. I think I would try the Pacific. Let me know the minute they come out.

"But nothing has made me so happy as to have you come out of that long eclipse. I missed you so, and was very dark and cold without you. I was sure you would be all right after a while, but I thought you would emerge gradually. I

wasn't a bit prepared to have you bounce out so bright and splendid. I shall work twice as well, now. We shall see good days yet. And don't let us waste any tears over Aunt Hopper. Did you see that the man who saved the Russian Emperor's life, and was advanced to great honors and wealth, has committed suicide? He was unable to bear the intoxication of his good luck; he took to drinking, and here is the end. So you see it isn't always safe to come to great fortune. Make your own application.

"Only one thing in the letter bothered me; and that was your speaking of Mr. Greyson again, in that mysterious way. I don't understand what you mean, and don't want to, but when you go to calling Harvey Davison the bigger man of the two, I can't help thinking you girls are a hopeless set of bats. The truth is, you don't half know Greyson; he never *pushes*, while Harvey is always spreading himself right under your nose. It is the old story — the sun, being *nearest*, is able to drown the light of far grander stars.

"But this isn't what I wanted to say. About that story, whatever it is, you know there may not be a word of truth in it. But even if it is so — if the very worst is true — we may be doing a dreadful wrong, if we repeat it. Let

me tell you one of *my* stories, I think I will call it—

*The Feet of Clay.*

“‘There was once a beautiful image with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, and legs of iron. Just by the side of it stood two other images, and one was all of brass, and the other all of lead. They were always quite satisfied with themselves except when they looked at the brilliant golden head, the pure silver breast, and the strong legs of iron. Then they grew very unhappy, and, after a time, they began to hate it.’

“‘But one day the Brass said joyfully to the Lead, “I wouldn’t tell any one but you, but I have made a horrible discovery.— Did you ever look at the feet of this wonderful image? I cannot tell how he manages to stand on them—they are more than half *clay*!”’

“‘How dreadful!’ said Lead. ‘Now *we* may be of baser metal, but we do not deceive; we are firm and consistent throughout. Is it right to leave this image standing on such a wretched foundation? Is it not our *duty* to disclose such an imposition to the public. Let us set the matter right.’

“‘Then each of them took a stone, and threw

it at the feet, and the beautiful image fell heavily, and the precious gold and silver lay in the dust forever.'


"A word to the wise Kriss, is more than sufficient. If we find or even *suspect* the clay feet, let us cover them quickly in love and silence; and let us rejoice every day that we find the golden head and silver breast still standing, shining and beautiful.

"There, now, Kriss, honor bright, which of us can preach the best?

"I can't finish though, without giving you an encouraging little pat on the back. Maybe you can't see it yourself, but your 'John' has taken an astonishing start. He has grown splendidly in a few weeks, and, I'm afraid, is getting far ahead of mine. Go and ask the dear Crum, and see if she doesn't think that, at the very least, he is beginning to *creep*!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### JOHN'S CHOICE.

T was a languid day in August ; the streets stretched white and blinding in the sun; the house was full of dust and flies, with both of which natural enemies, Christie had waged uncompromising warfare since early morning. Her mother had gone with baby and Dump, to spend the day in Berlin, and she had been anxious to accomplish a great deal in her absence. Life had kept growing narrower — more and more pinching seemed necessary ; in place of Bridget and Nancy, there was now only one inefficient small girl. So, after the sweeping and dusting, Christie had spent the morning in the hot kitchen, baking.

She had just finished. A pot of nice little cakes had been carried to the cellar, and a beautiful crisp apple-pie was cooling on the back stoop. This she had made for her father — he was fond of apple-pies — and he had so little to

please him now. Besides, the apples grew on their own tree, and he could enjoy it without worrying about the expense. It had been a good morning's work, she thought, as she went to throw herself on the sofa in the darkened room for a minute's rest. But hardly was she settled when the door opened, and the small girl put in her head.

"Miss Christie, here's them Dawses wot goes to sewin'-school, and they wants to see you uncommon bad."

Christie sighed like a furnace. "Those *horrid* little Daws!" Then she laughed a little. "Get up, you lazy good-for-nothing Jack," she cried. "Here's your chance."

Such a story as was poured forth by the three voluble little Daws! They hadn't one of them tasted a mouthful that day; the hardest heart would have been moved to compassion. Christie gave them plenty of bread and butter, and when the hungry, sniffing little noses seemed to discover something still more fascinating in the air, she could not help taking the hint. Down cellar and up again, went the tired feet, and soon each little Daw was finding how delightfully life and gingerbread go down together.

Christie, in a glow of self-approval, went back to her sofa, only to be again disturbed in two

minutes more. This time the door flew open to present an apparition of John-Jack, with both hands raised. He simply ejaculated "Cousin!" in the deepest agitation, and vanished as suddenly as he came.

"It must be a tragedy this time," cried Christie, rushing out to the back stoop. Alas! yes. There with many Ohs! and Ahs! stood John-Jack, and the small girl mournfully contemplating the ruins of Christie's beautiful pie; there was nothing left but the bottom crust, and a fraction of rim.

"Them horrid little Dawses —" began the small girl.

"Have scooped it with their pawses!" finished Christie, solemnly. It was really too dreadful to smile. The ungrateful little wretches! Only to think how patiently she had taught them — all the ten commandments, and such beautiful little hymns too. Hark! didn't she hear them singing that very minute?

She ran to the fence. Yes, there they were upon the front door-steps, looking delightfully innocent, and singing — Could it be possible? — they had been singing "Come to Jesus;" and with faith too deep to be disturbed by any little consciousness of human weakness, they were now

going on, in shrill chorus, to the next verse.  
"Jesus *loves* you ! Jesus loves you."

But as clouds will sometimes come in the clearest sky, so, at sight of Christie's face, with a glimpse of John-Jack armed with an old broom, —*doubts* seem to have arisen. The little Daws rapidly scattered, and with much screaming and fluttering, were lost to sight in some valley, or *alley* of humiliation.

Christie,—with some difficulty, restraining John-Jack, whose zeal inclined him to vigorous pursuit,—went back quite discomfited to her sofa.

"Real life is so very different from the way it is in stories," she said. "Now if I had been writing a Sunday-school book about a girl who had worked as *I* have, and gone to sewing-school so many weary days — had so long

'Sat on a stile,  
And continued to smile,  
To soften the heart of those Daws —'

I should begin to give her a reward ; I should have had the good seed springing up by this time, and all the little Daws setting beautiful examples to the oldest church-members. Well, well," she finished, after a pause ; "it won't do to give up so soon. I must give John a fair trial. If I don't get much comfort out of his

choosing yet, I suppose the fault *must* be in myself."

She drew a letter from her pocket, received the day before from Tom. Tom was always so strong and sensible.

"Whenever I hear or read any thing good," he had written, "I want to run straight and tell *you*. It is splendid to get a new idea — to find you can understand great minds, and 'receive the shock of mighty thoughts.' Now here is something Christie, that seems to make that little matter of *choosing*, clearer. I want to copy it for you, word for word.

" 'Through the susceptibilities, the passivities, the movement from without inward, we have pleasure ; through the activities, the choices, the volitions, the movement from within outward, we have joy, happiness, blessedness. And as these forms of good are different in their origin, so are they in their quality. By the one we are allied to the animals, by the other to the angels. For the one we are dependent upon circumstances, for the other upon *choice*.'

"Do you understand it Christie? I suppose what comes to us from 'without inward,' is every thing we *receive* ; pleasant sights and sounds, our food, etc. All this pleasure we share

with the animals. But when with the movement from 'within *outward*,' we choose the happiness and well-being of another, choose to do good, — then this is what we *give*. Animals cannot give. This is our angel-side — the God-side; and of course the happiness that comes from this choosing must be infinitely higher. This is why it is more blessed to give than receive. And this happiness does not depend upon circumstances, you know; the poorest, humblest person has it in his own *choice*."

"All very clear in theory," sighed Christie, folding the letter. "I should like to choose the side allied to the angels, but I can't keep myself up to such a pitch all the time. Now a thoroughly good person would choose to go up and see that Mrs. Barnes, I suppose. The little Daws said she was worse, and the baby crying almost all the time. I might take up a little milk, — but it is so *very* hot."

She paused, and looked uneasily out of the window. "There, that will do," she cried indignantly in a few minutes. "The old Christie is worse than the Daws; the gratitude-book hasn't had an entry in a week; how can she ever think of taking her little fellow-servants by the throat? She shall go this very afternoon."

Then she went up stairs to finish some copy-  
ing. Life had been very much of a struggle,  
lately. Three times had the lamp and pitcher  
and trumpet gone up against Jericho, at what  
she considered the weakest, most accessible  
points, but the walls were unshaken. Three  
times had her little package, with its clear,  
pains-taking penmanship, come back upon her  
hands. "Returned with thanks. Such sick-  
ness of heart came over her at thought of the  
cold, courteous words. But she had great en-  
ergy, and she could not bear to give it up.  
There was one other magazine she might try ;  
she had heard that the publishers were very  
kind to young authors ; yes, there certainly was  
a hope in that direction, she thought, as she  
finished it, and directed the envelope. Now, how  
should she get it to Emma ? It would give it  
a more important air, she thought, to have it start  
on its travels with the post-mark of Berlin.

Just then the door bell rang.

"It is Mr. Greyson," said Jack, looking in  
with a very red face.

"Where is he ?" said Christie, jumping up.

"Out on the stoop."

"Why, Jack, how can you do so ! Why  
didn't you ask him in ?"

"He needn't bother so," said Jack, doggedly.  
"Comes all the time"

"Well, Jack has been very cross and bad. I shall remember it," said Christie running down stairs.

"I just called to see if your mother had any commissions for Berlin. I am going down in the next train," said Mr. Greyson.

"O, are you? How fortunate!" cried Christie, impulsively. "Could you take a little package for *me*?"

"Even if it is a bandbox," smiled Mr. Greyson, probably thinking that virtue could go no farther.

Christie ran for the bundle, then hesitated, colored; how could she have been so stupid! There it was directed — "Messrs. Flaggman & Switch. Editors of Grand Trunk Quarterly." He would guess every thing in a minute. But she didn't know how to draw back; so she said —

"You could put that in the post-office at Berlin, without looking at the direction, couldn't you?"

Mr. Greyson balanced the heavy packet gravely, — just a hint of the old smile tugging at his mouth corners, — and stated that he

thought he should be able, unless his strength failed unaccountably within the next hour.

Christie plaited her little apron nervously. Tom was so far away, and the secret so heavy. Should she tell him any thing? She believed he half knew it already, she saw it in his eyes.

Mr. Greyson looked at her. It was not hard to read the flushed, troubled face.

"Yes, tell me, Christie," said he, with a grave penetrating kindness, that was quite irresistible.

So Christie poured forth the story of her hopes, — not her humiliations, she would rather die, she thought, than have him know that three doors had already been shut in her face.

Mr. Greyson listened with an interest that did her tired heart good. He thought a few moments.

"And so little Christie wants to be an authoress," he said half regretfully. "I do not think it is a happy life, unless one is very successful. But I will help you all I can. Suppose you let me take this to a friend of mine, who has had some experience, and has gotten this great Public safely by the ear. He will look over the articles, and send you a true, honest opinion. If they are not fitted for success, he will criti-

use them kindly, and if they *are*, he will advise you where they had better appear."

Christie colored vividly; but perhaps success might lie just beyond this little fiery pass. She must not shrink from it. She ran up stairs to change the wrapper, talking to herself as she went.

"He doesn't encourage me a bit, as Harvey would; he doesn't say that I shall wake up some morning and find myself famous. Ah! there are so many mornings to wake up and be nobody, first! But I think he truly means to help me. I mustn't find too much fault with the way."

She ran down again in a little flush of embarrassment and gratitude.

"Mr. Greyson, you don't know how much I thank you. You have always been such a true friend, — my own papa couldn't possibly have been kinder."

Mr. Greyson elevated his eyebrows with an expression that Christie did not quite understand. She looked up uneasily. "I haven't said half enough —" she began.

"O, more than enough;" smiled Mr. Greyson. "A man must be very hungry of praise not to be satisfied with that." And he straight way took his leave.

Jack did not make his appearance at dinner, nor could any thing be found of him, till late in the afternoon, when Christie was sallying forth with her pail of milk. Then he emerged from some hiding-place of repentance, and humbly petitioned to accompany her.

"Why Jack," cried Christie, looking with astonishment on various bumps and bruises all over his white forehead. "What *have* you been doing to your head!"

"Punched it! *John*," explained Jack briefly, in a very moist state of penitence.

And Christie comprehending how unusually severe the stern John had been in the administration of justice, could not add one word of censure. She could only laugh, and receive poor Jack into favor again. So he trotted on behind. A low growling, now and then—"O, I'll settle with you! I'll teach you manners!"—apprising her that John and Jack were not yet entirely reconciled.

On the way, she caught sight of Belle and Lu and Christina, riding in the Houghton's luxurious carriage. They were all beautifully dressed, and looked so gay and happy, Christie's life seemed poor and hard and bare by contrast. "I wonder if it will always be so? Why

can't I have a little happiness as well as other girls?" she said gloomily, pursuing her way to Mrs. Barnes with slow, spiritless steps.

The house stood back of the village, quite by itself, and Christie could hear the little wailing baby, sometime before she reached the door. She opened it, and in a minute had forgotten her own troubles, in the misery of the scene before her. Such a bare, comfortless room! Such a hollowed-eyed woman lying on the bed, too weak and wretched to do any thing for the little bundle of bones that lay at her feet, the hot August sun streaming full in its helpless face.

"Are you all alone?" asked Christie, quite shocked. "Don't you have any one to help you?"

"Mrs. Daws comes, when she don't go a washin'," said the woman slowly, between her fits of coughing, "and the other neighbors is kind; but they're all workin' people; they don't have no time to spare; we're mostly alone."

"Somebody ought to wash the baby," said Christie, turning with a shiver of disgust from the grimness of the little face, but standing so she could brush away the big, eager flies. "If he were only clean, and the flies didn't bother

him so, he would go to sleep — don't you think so ? ”

“ Yes,” said Mrs. Barnes, breaking into weak tears. “ It would soothe him wonderful. But there's nobody to do it.”

“ Cousin will do it,” cried John-Jack, deeply interested. “ She washes the baby at home.”

“ O, no, Jack ! ” she cried eagerly, “ don't speak of such a thing ! ” She thought of the baby at home, with his healthy, round limbs, and pure sweet aprons and dresses, and then looked again at the little mass of rags and dirt. O, no, quite impossible ! As she told Tom, such things always made her faint. She had such a repulsion for any thing that was not scrupulously clean — such an aversion to dirt even in its mildest forms. If her mother only were there, or old Mrs. Crum — She turned and walked away to the window.

She was not satisfied with herself. This terrible “ law of love,” what did it require of her now ? “ That ye love one another as I have loved you.” *How* did He love ? As if one had spoken beside her, came the words :

“ And supper being ended . . . . He took a towel, and girded himself.”

It came to Christie with a new meaning.

This was the Son of God, who came down from the holy, spotless Father, from the society of the pure angels, from the Heaven where nothing that *defileth* could ever enter in. And *He* had deigned to wash the travel-stained feet of His disciples !

What must it have been to *Him* !

Then this grand, patient God had said—"If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

"Choose, John," said Christie, faintly, and not daring to trust herself another minute, she turned quickly, sent Jack to a neighbor's for warm water, and took the moaning baby upon her lap. Very tenderly, — as doing service for one whose angel was always beholding the face of our father, — she bathed the poor little limbs. John-Jack stood by, very eager to help.

"Cousin, what is that ?" he cried suddenly, pointing to the baby's feet.

"He's a poor unfortunate !" answered the woman, crying weakly again. "He was born so. It would have been a hard enough road to travel without them little club-feet. I don't know how we'll ever get through."

Christie didn't answer. She couldn't help

thinking that the poor little feet hadn't much farther to go.

But John-Jack was revolving some weighty matter in his mind. His eyes were dilated with alarm.

"Cousin!" he gave her a quick nervous pull. "Cousin, are *Johns* ever born that way?"

"O, Jack, what a queer fellow you are!" cried Christie. "O, no, I hope not. Perhaps though—" she fell into deep thought. It did almost seem, judging from the slow progress of some souls, as if they had not been born quite healthily into spiritual life.

"Perhaps—what, cousin?" repeated John-Jack, eagerly.

"O, well," said Christie, recovering herself. "I don't know but you are half right, Jacky. I shouldn't wonder a bit if *my* John had club feet!"

She laughed, but Jack fairly turned pale.

"I suppose Jesus could cure him?" he asked after a few minutes of anxiety.

"Yes, Jack," said Christie, sober enough now. "If I can only go a little faster, and get near enough to touch Him. I follow Him so very far off."

Jack pondered. "Cousin, is there any thing the matter with *my John*?"

"No, don't think of it."

"But there *must* be, if there is with yours," he persisted, uneasily.

"Well, if you'd like it any better," laughed Christie, "we'll say that he doesn't *see* quite straight. I think something is the matter with his eyes."

"Blind!" said Jack, in an awe-struck tone.

"Yes, but Jesus will cure him the minute he touches him, you know," said Christie, kindly.

Jack was again lost in thought. "Cousin," said he presently, "John is glad he is blind."

"Why?"

"Because Jesus will have to *touch* him anyway. Maybe He don't put his hands on all the well ones."

"Why, that's a nice thought, Jacky. I believe you will be splendid after He puts his hands on you. I know I shall admire and love you very much."

"Will you, cousin?" he cried, springing up in great excitement. "But no,"—a heavy cloud swept over his radiant face, "that will be *John*. What will become of poor Jack? I want some-

body to love Jack." The tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"Why Jack, I've told you a hundred times that you and John will have to be the same person, at last. O, dear, if I could only make you understand it! Now this is true, Jack,—John can't go anywhere without taking Jack with him."

"Yes, he can," exclaimed Jack, in sad triumph. "John is so cunning. I think he is away 'most every night. Time and time again, when I'm most asleep, I've caught him slipping away, and slipping away—O, he's a sly fellow."

"Yes," said Christie, "but if he slipped away and ran up to Heaven alone, that would be mean and selfish, and you say he is good."

Jack nodded, but he was only half comforted. He had his doubts whether it would not be an entirely justifiable performance for John to run away from the wicked Jack.

In the meantime, Christie had finished, — the baby was washed and dressed in a sweet, clean little night-gown, she had fortunately happened to bring. It had not been so very hard, after all. The baby had looked at her with such patient, wondering sweetness, as the grateful water soothed its fevered restless limbs, that her

eyes had filled with happy tears. And now she prepared the milk, and carried it by careful spoonfuls to the eager mouth, till low, crooning noises, testified to fulness of baby content, and the lids slowly drooped in sweetest, balmiest sleep.

"He hasn't slept that way for a week," said the woman, gratefully. "Most likely I could get a bit of rest now, myself."

Christie took the hint, "Good-bye," said she, awkwardly enough. "I'll try to come to-morrow."

She came out of the wretched hovel just as the Houghton's carriage was returning. She would gladly have stepped back, but they had seen her, and Belle gave the signal to stop.

"O, Christie," cried Lu, "is that where the embroidery woman lives? I have some work—"

"O, no," interrupted Belle, "was that what you wanted? I could have told you that. That poor Barnes used to live here, — the one who was blown up, you know."

"Ah, I didn't know they were on the list of your calling acquaintances," laughed Lu.

"She washed the baby," stated John-Jack, with grave brevity.

Christie colored.

"Why Christie, I *hope* you haven't been doing

such an absurd thing," cried Lu. "I wouldn't touch one of the dirty little creatures for the world, — unless it was with a pair of tongs."

"It was such a wretched little baby," said Christie, "and its mother was too sick to do the least thing for it."

"Then you really did it," said Christina, with an injured air. She regarded it as a personal affront for any one to pretend to surpass her in any thing, even goodness. "You are always aching to do something different from other people," she continued. "But you are up and down. Come to strike an average, I don't believe you would turn out much better than the rest of us."

There was a low muttering from John-Jack. Christie patted him very much as one would a faithful Newfoundland dog.

"Yes, you have regular chills and fever. The fever is on to-day, but nobody knows how cold you will be to-morrow."

"You never said a truer word than that," laughed Christie. Somehow nothing seemed to disturb her just then. "What shall I take for it?"

"A little of the quinine of common-sense," said Christina, shortly.

"Thank you for the first dose. Will it all be so bitter?"

The girls laughed. "Have you had a pleasant ride?" asked Christie, changing the subject.

"Not very," said Belle, discontentedly, "so warm."

"And I have faded the front breadth of my dress," said Lu, in a tone of annoyance. "Just see the difference under the plaits."

"It will take me a full hour to get the dust out of my flounce," added Christina. "And we have been 'most choked. There is never half so much pleasure in any thing as you think there is going to be."

"I was going to ask you to ride home with us," began Belle, with some restraint. She had been very cool to Christie lately.

"Don't touch *me*, if you do," cried Christina, with a little shrug of disgust. "Don't you know you may have taken some dreadful disease!"

Belle looked greatly alarmed; and Christie didn't wonder at it, in the least. She had felt just so herself, so very recently; she hardly knew what had made the change.

"Thank you, I would rather not ride," she

said smiling. "Sorry to disappoint you, but I am going to take a walk back over the hills, out of the dust. I should truly like it better."

She stood watching them a minute as they rolled away. They had not then been receiving such unalloyed happiness. And where was all her envy gone? What would tempt her to exchange her afternoon for theirs? She walked on with such a light feeling at her heart, she seemed almost in a different world. Now and then she, unconsciously, sang softly to herself. And ever before her was that wan baby's sweet, wondering look. It was more than a baby look, more than human, — her heart thrilled with a sudden sweet joy, — had the Master himself been looking through those patient, pathetic eyes, and acknowledging — "Ye have done it unto *Me!*" What! could it be that she, Christie Hammond, had been allowed the great honor of doing something for *Him!* Was it something to be glad about every day of her life? something to be glad about when she came to die? something that could *never* be taken from her — something to be glad about all through eternity! Christie gave a little start. Why, this must be the "*happiness*," at last, come upon her so unawares. The "Plan" was

quite right; she could never doubt again. She had found out what it was to choose the side allied to the angels.

She stopped a moment, leaning against a tree. It was such a discovery — she was fairly trembling with the new sweetness that had come into her life.

Had she done a very little thing, after all? Does this happiness seem exaggerated — overstrained? When one does a favor for a king, the thanks are given in precious jewels—in honors and titles—in purses of gold, right royally. When God accepts a service through one of these “little ones,” — with reverence be it said, — He thanks *divinely* — He thanks with the peace that passeth understanding — He gives his people *blessedness*.

---

Two days afterwards, the little baby went to be touched by Jesus. Christie and Jack stood by very soberly, watching good Mrs. Crum folding the waxen hands, now so very clean and pure.

“He slept so sweet all that night,” said the mother. “It was the last comfort he had. Then the fever took him again, and he couldn’t keep still no way. Day and night just callin’ ‘Mam — mam!’” I can’t get it from my head that

he's callin' it yet. 'Mam — mam!' it was the only word he knew," she began to sob.

"Well, of course he is," said Jack, wondering. "They'll let him say it up there. That's a Heaven word, *isn't* it, Cousin?"

"The sense of the poor natural!" cried Mrs. Crum, looking up with a tear in her eye. "Yes that's a Heaven word, no doubt. Nobody will stop him saying that. Don't cry so, you poor creetur! There never was a baby went to Heaven yet, that didn't call its mother every day. I think that's the way God meant to have it."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHRISTIE REVIVES.



THE trees were already turning crimson and yellow in the late October days, when Christie sat by her window, looking disconsolately upon a mass of papers spread out before her. Upon the portfolio in her lap was a sheet adorned with the simple sentence, "The Rainbow of my Life," and a confusion of detached heads, arms, flowers, cats and dogs, vigorously drawn, but evidently in desperation, with no intention of wreaking thought upon any kind of expression. From time to time, she glanced at a letter lying before her,—the long delayed letter of the literary friend,—especially the sentence beginning—

"It is for this reason, my dear Miss Hammond, only for this reason, because it is too *good*—far too good—that your article has been 'returned with thanks.'"

"Humbug!" cried Christie, tears of indig-

nation coming in her eyes. "Does he take me for a baby? Of course nothing was ever rejected for the fault of being too good." Still he had meant to be kind, — meant to soften the pain of the humiliation. She read a little farther.

"And now allow me, innocent young authoress," Christie winced, "to induct you into one or two of the mysteries of publication. *Mon cher Publique* is a monster whose taste is made up, not of the opinions of the few truly loving genial critics, but of the separate likings of Mr. A. who keeps a stable, and relishes something with good horse points about it; Mrs. B. who leaves her children to servants, and loves to hear thrilling accounts of maternal heroism — in bed and curl papers; Mr. C. who is a dandy of weak muscle, roused into heroism only by streams of blood running down the columns, not of an army, but a magazine. I think you understand me, my dear Miss Hammond. Write them — forgive the imperative, — with more reference to salient points, startling positions, unexpected tragic denouements, with an eye more to scenic effect.

"For instance. Suppose a man riding into some busy market-place, like the wind run mad, and crying out —

“The banditti are within half a league of the town! They have slain seven market men, and robbed all the wagons. I am the only survivor. They are coming to sack this place within the hour! They have marked for death you, and you, and you! they will carry off your daughter, and yours, and yours. To arms! For your life and honor!”

“Build upon some such plot as this, and let your sentences be oftener of the coupé order than the flowing. When you have finished your work, *sleep* over it a few times. Then read again, and clip, prune, foreshorten, until every sentence strikes a quick, sharp blow like a bullet; and, at last, you will find your story one compact, intense power.”

Christie paused; she felt quite out of breath. Such a labor, — and he wrote as if it were such a simple, easy thing to do. She had burned the old disgraced, rejected lamp, pitcher and trumpet. She could as soon pass counterfeit money, as try to palm them off on any one again. And yet she had thought they had the true ring. How the publishers must have laughed, and shrugged their shoulders! Her very soul seemed blushing in the hot rushing tide of humiliation. Should she try any farther? Ah, how *could*

she give it up ? Even if she met with no great success, at first, and had to delay the joyful moment of helping her father ; it would be something if she could earn enough to dress herself, and not be a burden to him. Even John-Jack had been very busy, lately, with various odd jobs. Everybody was kind to him, and he was laying up quite a store of pennies. She doubted though, whether he had yet earned enough to buy a pair of boots, which he had been needing so long. The fact was, they all needed boots and shoes, from herself down to baby ; but how could any one ask papa ? Hadn't he said that very morning, that he was dying by inches ? He was going through the rest of his life like a man with a ball and chain to his leg. Poor papa ! and poor Christie ! She thrust out her feet, and looked mournfully at the whitened toes.

"Harvey Davison has been home two days," she thought. "It is a perfectly charming morning. If he should come and ask me to ride, as he sometimes does, could I get in and out, talking all the time, so he would never think of looking down ?"

She concluded she could. And the longer she looked out on the yellow sunlight, the more sure she felt that he *would* come. Lu told her

he had often mentioned her in his letters, and was very anxious to see her. Christie smiled, as she sat there thinking. The young heart was very hungry for a little happiness.

"Nonsense!" she cried, suddenly rousing herself. "Here I am wasting my whole morning."

John-Jack, and Dump had gone down street together, and baby was taking his morning nap. It was not often she had such a chance. She seized her pencil again. Now what *should* she do with her hero and heroine? She felt in the most relentless, sanguinary mood; she would most cheerfully drown them, burn them, or strike them by lightning, any thing that would please this great monster Public.

"I will write a novelette in five parts," she concluded, "each one cram-jam with excitement and interest. There shan't be a chapter with less than a fire or explosion in it, and the grand finale shall be a typhoon or an earthquake, according as I make up my mind to finish them up on land or sea."

That would certainly be tragic denouement enough, and would satisfy herself no less than the public. It was such a nice way of disposing of all one's characters in a lump, and *hers*, — after making a good beginning, — were so apt

to turn stupid on her hands, and go wandering aimlessly about, that she would really enjoy revenging herself by blowing them all up in the end.

So the pencil raced over the paper. Very queer, unnatural little puppets began to dance on most astonishing stages of action, and simple, good natures were ruthlessly precipitated into depths of villainy, for which they had not the slightest preparation, and acted accordingly — such delightfully short-sighted rascals. But, Christie became more and more absorbed; she was deeply interested now, with a vague feeling that she was in two different zones, — her head on the equator, and her feet on an iceberg in the Polar sea, — when a voice came faintly through the closed and bolted door.

“Christie! Christie!”

She tried not to hear it; but it came again, —

“Christie, Christie, my dear.”

She flung down every thing, and rushed to the door.

“What, mamma?” so impatiently. Her mother hesitated a minute.

“Would you be willing to amuse baby a few minutes, Christie? I wouldn’t ask you, dear, but I have such a blinding headache.”

"O, dear!" exclaimed Christie. Of course her mother didn't know, but she had called her at the very dead of night; the clock had just tolled twelve solemnly and slow, and in the chamber where Paul de Vere lay in the sweet slumber of innocence and virtue, the window-curtains were slowly parting—a hair breadth—an inch—and the eyes of the villain were just looking through, "colder and fiercer than the gleaming steel that he carried in his right hand."

To think of being called at such a moment, to amuse a little baby cutting his eye teeth.

It is strange that Christie,—having once known the blessedness of giving up self, should ever again make a mistake. But one is not always upon the mount of vision.

It often takes a long life to fully realize that the Inventor's Plan is only and *always* right. At every new trial it is apt to seem as strange as ever. We go back again and again to our own way.

So Christie went down with a frown upon her face. She was not impatient with poor, unreasonable little baby, but she was any thing but cheerful. The service was not of *choice*, and so no peace came with it.

By and by the little kitchen girl, — having laid the table, and set the potatoes boiling, announced that she would take baby till Mr. Hammond came in. Christie gave him up in a flash, and rushed back to her room. Every thing seemed changed though, as she read over the last words of her story. It was not so interesting — so intensely written as she thought. And that sentence left in the middle — how did she ever mean it to end? And was she going to strike consternation to the villain's soul by a clap of thunder, or a mild earthquake, or did she decide to have Paul's greyhound jump at his throat? Her head was beginning to ache. It was quite impossible to get back that glow of inspiration, which was quenched when her mother called her.

In the meantime John-Jack was approaching the house, with unusual animation, in his long swinging step.

"You see, Dump," he was telling her for the twentieth time, "Jack thought he never *could* earn money enough. Two dollars and a quarter, that's a fortune!" he chuckled.

All right, though. Gray, that's her color, — two buttons, all right. She's so fond of gloves! *Jack* bought e'm for her."





Write "Cousin from Jack." — PAGE 221.

"Jack ought to get something for himself," said good little Dump.

"Yes, cotton ones, by and by ; cover just as well. She won't notice the old ones to-day, she'll be so pleased. She'll laugh, won't she ?"

They reached the house. "Now Dump," said he, ascending the stairs, "you promised you'd print it for me. Write 'cousin.'"

"*Dear cousin*" queried Dump.

Jack looked troubled. "No, maybe she wouldn't like it. Write 'cousin, from Jack.' Be sure you put *Jack*. John said it was a good thing to do, but Jack thought of it first ; and he's the one that did all the work. Worked ever since last June for 'em. Some days didn't lay by more than a penny. But here it is. Now fold it just like a gentleman's letter. That's it," and talking and chuckling to himself, Jack advanced to Christie's castle.

"I guess she'll like me a little the best *now*, John. Got a little the start of you this time, old fellow."

Christie was just getting up steam again. She was reading over the last words.

"The curtain slowly parted,—a hairbreadth,—an inch ; the cold, cruel eyes of —"

Rap, rap, rap.

Christie never stirred. "The cold, cruel eyes —" she repeated, with a frowning brow.

Another knock. "Cousin, cousin, are you there?"

Christie felt as if every nerve in her body were floating out at loose ends; but she gave no sign of life; perhaps he would go away.

"Cousin, here's a letter for you — a real gentleman's letter."

Ah, from Harvey to ask her to drive! she had been almost sure of it all day. She jumped up quickly enough. Let the wretched, discouraging writing go. She would spend an hour at least, in fairy-land. She might have been sure he would not forget her.

She drew the bolt of the door, and Jack eagerly thrust out the packet and the little note, without a word. Did they not speak eloquently for themselves? He drew back a little, the better to see her pleasure and surprise.

Christie tore open the note with a pleased expectant flush, rapidly succeeded by blank disappointment, as she saw the simple words. Only some nonsense of Jack's. He had been buying her a paper of lozenges, maybe, or a twopenny ribbon. So different from what she thought, so different. It was more than flesh

and blood could stand. She flung the packet on the floor.

"O, Jack, how *can* you be so provoking and stupid ! Don't ever come disturbing me again with any such foolishness."

And shutting the door very hard, and locking it, she disappeared, with angry, tearful face, from Jack's vision.

He sat down in great bewilderment upon the steps. This was the hour of which he had dreamed for more than a hundred days and nights. The happy moment which had so long made a golden future, had come and gone. How ? Just as a great many other things had come and gone in the poor, weak, puzzling life.

"You said she'd like it, John. I thought you knew."

To this mild, well deserved reproach, the wise John made no reply. Jack's confidence in him was greatly shaken ; he fell back upon his own resources.

"It was your *hands*, Jack ;" he said, "she saw 'em through the holes. That's what set her against you in the first place."

He held them up, looking mournfully at Tom's dilapidated gloves. Yes, this was the solution of the painful mystery ; it was quite

clear to the poor benumbed mind and nodding his head in quiet despair, — entirely satisfied that it was all right and just, — Jack crept away to his room.

In the meantime, Christie was finding it quite useless to attempt regaining the thread of her story. Her mind was in great commotion, and she was oppressed with that feeling of degradation, — that loss of self-respect — which proved beyond a doubt that she had been making some unworthy *choice*. What a morning it had been ! Thinking of herself, trying to please herself all day, and with the usual success. She glanced at the little blank gratitude-book, and again at the card by the mirror — “and bridled not her tongue, that girl’s religion is vain.” She was full of trouble and discouragement. Some words from a little book Mrs. Crum always carried in her pocket, came into her mind.

“Know that the love of *thyself*, doth hurt thee more than any thing in the world.”

“On this sin, that a man inordinately loveth himself, almost all dependeth . . . . which evil being once overcome and subdued, there will presently ensue great peace and tranquility.”

Christie knew it very well, the old, hard lesson. But she hated it so ! Ah, how tired of

her, God must be! Hadn't she done every thing to wear out even this grand, wonderful Patience?

She stood by the window with hands clasped, repeating slowly —

“Lord, many times I am aweary quite,  
Of sin, myself, and mine own vanity;  
Yet, be not Thou — or I am lost outright—  
Weary of me.

“And hate against myself I often bear,  
And enter with myself in fierce debate;  
Take Thou my part against myself, nor share  
In that just hate!”

And then she just cried, as often before,

“Lord, do not give me up! In spite of all,  
*do not give me up.*”

Once, the angel Gabriel being made to fly swiftly, brought a speedy answer to prayer.

While Christie was yet speaking, a messenger knocked at the door.

“Christie,” called her mother, a few minutes afterwards.

Christie went quickly now.

“Here is Hannah come after me to go up to Aunt Hopper's. Uncle Hopper is almost helpless with the rheumatism, and Aunt Hopper is not at all well herself. The two poor old people are lonely, and want a little company and

sympathy. Now *I* am worse than useless to-day, you know, I'm sorry, dear, but I thought if you —"

"O, mother!" exclaimed Christie; all the trials of the day sinking into nothing before the prospect of a long dismal afternoon with Aunt Hopper.

Well, she had prayed, "Do not give me up." If God *did* not give her up, she must grow greatly in patience and self-denial. That she *might* grow in patience and self-denial, she was sent direct to Aunt Hopper. It was all very clear, but Christie saw it dimly. We are often very much astonished and displeased when our prayers are answered.

"Yes, I want you to go, Christie," said her father, who had just come in to dinner. "Do what you can for her. See if you can't undo some of the evil."

"I'm afraid I can't father," said Christie, timidly; she couldn't bear to have him indulging a false hope. "Aunt Hopper doesn't soften at all. She tells me every time I go, that her will is made, and —"

"That was a sad night's work," interrupted her father irritably. "Here we are under the harrow. The very roof over our heads isn't

our own. And there is Aunt Hopper with her hundred thousand dollars, and not a chick or a child, — ah, it's a very bitter thing. Here was a train coming down to us with comfort and plenty, and just for fun, Christie, you must put a little stone on the track, — only a little stone, but big enough to send every thing crashing to ruin."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Hammond, cheerfully, "there are worse troubles than poverty. I think we can live, if we *don't* get Aunt Hopper's money."

"Maybe you can ; but this burden is killing me," cried Mr. Hammond, whose troubles had altered him sadly. "By the way, if you're getting any thing new in the way of dresses, Christie, get *black* ; you'll have a use for it before the winter is over."

"Go, Christie," said her mother, pushing her gently from the room. "And if Aunt Hopper is feeling very miserable, perhaps you had better offer to stay all night."

Christie nodded ; she had no heart to oppose any thing now.

"And I believe it will kill *me*," she said, slowly mounting to her room, "if I do not succeed in my writing. It seems as if papa were

right about — that dreadful thing he said once."

As she passed Jack's door, a confused murmur of voices arrested her.

"Then let me read out of the red book Christie gave you," urged Dump, who had evidently nearly exhausted her powers of consolation.

"You may if you like," responded Jack listlessly.

"Where?"

"Read John's chapter."

"I'd rather read something to Jack."

"No, Jack's no good. No use doing any thing for Jack." He was very firm, in spite of all Dump's remonstrances.

And so she began to read "John's chapter," as often before. It was the beautiful story of blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, who sat by the highway-side, begging.

Jack grew gradually interested, as he always did, making a running commentary as she went on.

"'And many charged him that he should hold his peace.'"

"No, no, keep on John!"

"'But he cried the more a great deal —'"

"That's right! Call, loud as you can."

"Thou son of David have mercy on me.'"

"That's a good cry, John. He'll hear *that*."

And his ecstasy culminated, as she read.

"And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee."

Jack rubbed his hands in congratulation.

"Hey, John? That's a very good thing for you, John. Now you'll see just as well as any body."

"Yes," finished Dump, in triumphant sympathy. "'And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.'"

"And Jesus loved him?" queried Jack—

"O, yes, of course."

"But poor *Jack*," he cried, with one of his sudden transitions to despair. "Nobody will love Jack. John is so clever, he'll go slipping away, and slipping away —"

"Well, Jack must run after him," said little perplexed Dump. And she began to sing, knowing that was the surest way to soothe the poor troubled mind.

"And I will follow Jesus *all* the way," piped the shrill treble, and Jack joined in with his sweet, melancholy tenor.

The heart of the girl listening by the door, grew very tender. *All* the way — that was the

trouble. She was quite willing to follow Jesus into his kingdom, but couldn't bear to go by the highways first.

She drew a little nearer, and peeped in the half open door. She seldom went to Jack's room, of which he took most scrupulous care himself. She was a little touched by what she saw. On the wall by the side of his bed, hung a cheap chromo, (purchased with some money Tom had once given him,) in far-off imitation of her beautiful picture; and underneath were the self-same words, in straggling letters of every size and shape —

“ ‘This have I done for thee,  
What hast thou done for *Me*?’ ”

Jack's eyes were fixed upon them very mournfully now.

“ Asks him every day,” he nodded. “ Goes through him like a knife. But there's no use in Jack doing any thing. He isn't like folks. If he could go up with a fine present in his hand, which he *couldn't*, you know, I think the Lord would just say — ‘ Go away, you stupid ! Never come disturbin' me again.’ ”

Jack rocked backwards and forwards. It had been a cruel shock for him. It was his hour and power of darkness.

Christie rushed in, threw herself on the floor by his side, and put both arms around him.

"That was a miserable mistake, Jack," she cried. "Do, *do* try to forget it."

"He bought you these pretty gloves," said Dump, severely, holding them up.

"What!" cried Christie, "those beautiful, expensive gloves. And all your little savings? O, Jack, how could you! and how could I—"

She tried to take his hand, but they were both tight in his pockets; tortures couldn't have drawn them out. She was looking at him so kindly now, he feared lest the sunshine of favor should be suddenly dimmed. The poor, weak mind foresaw a fearful risk if she should catch sight of the hands before he had time to put on his gloves.

"Well, you will forgive me, Jack?"

Jack shook his head; he couldn't understand such a state of affairs.

"No? then I will never forgive myself."

"I don't see, Cousin," said he, "it is such a puzzle. Jack wasn't angry at all; it was you that was angry with Jack. You must forgive Jack."

"O, no," began Christie; but it was all in vain. Jack could only see that he had displeased *her*. He hadn't been angry about any thing. It would be all right if *she* forgave *him*.

"Well, I'll have to forgive you then," said Christie, between crying and laughing. "But listen, Jacky, I'll never say another cross word to you as long as I live."


And she never did.

She was thinking it all over again as she put on her bonnet and shawl.

"I know you, old Christie!" she broke forth indignantly. "Here you are again! Every little while, Christie revives and John dies. But I'm looking out for you now; 'I'll teach you manners,' as poor Jack says."

## CHAPTER XV.

JOHN WALKS.

HE weather had greatly changed in an hour ; the wind was blowing violently, and a heavy black cloud,—which had been lying unnoticed low on the horizon, like some huge, sleeping monster,—now slowly arose, stretched itself, and began devouring all the blue sky. Christie slowly fighting her way up to Aunt Hopper's with eyes half shut, stumbled violently against some passer-by. She started to consciousness.

“ I ported helm, and fired signals of distress,” said a voice she knew so very well, with the soft, well-bred laugh, “ but you were pitiless as you always are. You have done me great damage before, but you always go on

triumphantly, never waiting to see if I sink or swim."

"O, Mr. Davison!" cried Christie, delightedly. She had been so anxious to see him, lately. He always seemed to understand and appreciate her so much better than any one else, and she now needed greatly to be put in good humor with herself, to gain courage to go on with that wearisome writing. She put out her hand, impulsively, and was at the same moment, smitten with the consciousness that she had on a very worn pair of corn-colored gloves, (she had to be so saving now,) and a scarlet ribbon at her throat. Such little incongruities always shocked Harvey Davison, — it was a breaking of the sixth commandment in the decalogue of fashion, "Thou shalt not wear colors that kill each other." Christie saw that it had not escaped him, as glancing carelessly from hand to throat, and vivid cheeks, he said—

"Miss Christie, you remind me of a cathedral window."

"Yes," cried Christie impetuously, "but you *know* you don't mean that as a compliment. You know a cathedral window is no model for a girl's dress."

Harvey Davison bowed very low. "Whatever my tales may be, I always correct them after meeting Miss Hammond. Have you been quite well all these months? though that is an unnecessary question, your brilliant color has already answered me. I beg pardon for some haste—I have a little engagement—" And with another of those well-bred, profoundly deferential bows, Harvey Davison was gone.

Christie stood bewildered a moment. Had he really gone? Was this all, after the long, long absence? Her heart had been very hungry that day, in that state when the most beautiful polished stone could not begin to have the value of a mouthful of bread. She would have liked a few simple, honest words of interest, far better than volumes of well-turned flattery. The fact was, the beautiful, bright coin, for the first time, had rung with a very hollow sound. Could it be possible that with so much glitter, the metal was not quite pure after all? Christie pondered it, walking on with hot tears of vexation and disappointment.

As Christie came in sight of Aunt Hopper's

door, Christina rushed out, for once genuinely glad to see her.

"I am so glad you have come," she said. I've been watching for somebody, this hour. They are both really ill, and Aunt Hopper in one of her worst moods; just impossible to please her. I was quite going distracted. I just asked if I should send for nurse Crum, and she took fire right away—said this 'wasn't going to be her last illness by any means, and she was quite able to take care of herself, if I wasn't willing to stay.' So, there it was. I would have sent for mother, but she never can get along with Aunt Hopper, any better than your father. O, I'm so glad *you* have come!"

The two girls went in together. Aunt Hopper, at sight of Christie, broke into loud and repeated lamentations that it was not her mother, and listened most incredulously to Christie's attempted explanation.

"You are very clever, Christina Hammond," she said peevishly. "You've never given up the idea that you'll get something out of me yet. But what I've said, I've *said*. My will is all drawn up. There's not a penny coming to you at my death. I know there will be some

to find fault ; but I couldn't peril my immortal soul by a *lie*, could I ? ”

“ No, Aunt,” said Christie patiently ; while Christina was very busy at the fire. “ I fully understand that. Please don't tell me again. It wasn't for any such reason I came.”

“ Well, for what then ? ” cried the old lady with the suspicion that made her life miserable. Christie had often thought there was no peace for her even upon her bed ; she couldn't even trust *that*, always remembering that some unworthy member of its large family, had once betrayed confidence, and harbored a robber under the valance.

“ Perhaps it isn't unpleasant,” continued Aunt Hopper, “ for strong vigorous young people to come and look at the old ones drying up, and dropping away. Well, look on, if it pleases you. Your turn will come soon enough. We all do fade as a leaf.”

Christie, — very much occupied with thinking how Uncle Hopper sleeping in his chair, so full and florid, was fading like a maple, and Aunt Hopper, so lean and yellow, like an elm, — did not make any answer, which was perhaps the wisest thing she could have done.

Aunt Hopper rambled on in her cheerful

way. "And how's your father? They say *he* is failing faster than any body; most likely he'll end with a stroke. And your mother must be wearing out fast with all this trouble. I suppose it is little you do to help her."

"I'm afraid so," said Christie, simply.

Aunt Hopper put on her spectacles, and looked at her. "Deep!" was her mental comment, compounded of distrust and admiration.

A sudden gust of wind and rain striking against the window, awakened a new anxiety.

"What a storm it is! I declare I don't see how you girls can ever get home to-night." Christina looked out in dismay.

"It wouldn't be so bad for Christina Winter," continued the old lady, whose back was turned. "*She* came up of her own good heart to see her old aunt, but you, — who were *sent*, and much against your will, most probably, — I suppose *you* would be willing to swim all the way, to get home."

"No, I wouldn't, Aunt," said Christie, trying not to smile. "I'd rather stay."

"You would!" cried Aunt Hopper, with growing alarm. "Maybe you think you are going to be put in the best blue room, and it

just cleaned, with a new marseilles spread on the bed ! ”

She was fairly trembling with agitation. Truly “anxiety of mind is the worst of all evils except sin.”

But Christie cleared her skirts even of this depravity, and stated there was nothing she would like better than lying on the sofa with her own shawl around her.

Aunt Hopper was somewhat mollified. “That’s reasonable,” said she, “and then Christina Winter can sleep with *me*; your Uncle Hopper has took to the North room, since his rheumatism has been so bad—can’t bear to be touched.”

So it was all settled. The evening closed in early with wilder gusts of storm and rain. The old servant almost as helpless as her master and mistress, cleared away the five o’clock supper, and bedtime still loomed a far oasis in a desert of dreariness. But Aunt Hopper was really more ill than any one supposed, and after struggling in vain, to keep up, was forced to acknowledge himself vanquished, and allow the two girls to help her to bed.

Uncle Hopper, too, very feeble and querulous, betook himself early to his room; the

old servant went out to a neighbor's to borrow some yeast, and the two girls were left alone. Aunt Hopper's breathing soon testified that she had dropped into heavy sleep ; and the cousins, crouching over the low fire, began to talk as girls will, — whispering softly for fear of waking her.

“O Christie,” said Christina Winter, suddenly, — in the midst of the talk about Belle's new Paris suit, and when the “societies” were going to begin, — “I meant to have asked you before. I hope you haven't been up near any of the mill-people lately, have you ?”

“Not since Mrs. Barnes died, about a month ago.”

“O, I am so glad !” said Christina, greatly relieved. “They say the small-pox has broken out there terribly ; and if there's any thing of which I have a perfect horror ! —” Christina shivered. “Belle, and Lu and I were all vaccinated to-day. I wonder if yours hasn't run out ? Ever been done since you were a baby ?”

Christie shook her head, uneasily.

“Well, do it to-morrow, then. Any way don't let's talk about it now. It makes me

nervous. Besides I want to tell you something about Allan Greyson. Do you know there wasn' a word of that true about his going to prison?"

"There, I knew it," said Christie triumphantly.

"Well, you see it came so very straight, I didn't know what to think, at first. But I've had a letter from cousin Martin, and she is so sorry about the mistake. It was natural enough too. The man was a *cousin* of our Mr. Greyson, and had the very same name, something like you and me, you know. And cousin Martin writes that he has been unfortunate in every thing, since he sold out at that sacrifice, you remember, and has been very poor; but *our* Mr. Greyson has done every thing for him. It seems he had one very promising son, who took the disgrace so to heart, that they thought it would be the ruin of him; he wouldn't stir out, any more than his father. But Mr. Greyson took him by the hand, made a friend of him, educated him, and now he has gotten him a splendid situation abroad somewhere, through some friend of Mr. Fellowes. The whole family are going to sail with him in a month or two. Cousin Martha says

the old father is smiling again, for the first time in five years."

Christie was deeply interested. "I suppose this explains why he wears his old coats so long, and never dresses elegantly like Harvey Davison."

"He can dress as elegantly as he pleases now," said Christina quickly. "They are just about off his hands; and father says Fellowes and Greyson are just coining money."

"I wonder if that self-denial ever came hard to him?" said Christie. "I suppose such things grow easier though, as one grows old."

"Old!" repeated Christina. "You always talk, Christie, as if he were threescore years and ten. It is so foolish in you; he is only two years older than Harvey Davison."

Christie looked up in surprise at the crisp, short tone. Why should it so offend Christina?

"I never quite realize that, you know. When I was a little girl, he seemed a grown man; when I was ten, he was twenty; the difference does not seem so great now."

"I never thought I should like Mr. Greyson

so much," pursued Christina Winter. "He improves greatly on acquaintance. We have seen him very often lately. You know papa has a suit against Baggs and Hamper, of Berlin. Either that or something else," Christina smiled complacently, "brings him almost every day."

Christie, with one of her quick movements, threw another stick on the fire, and poked it vigorously.

"I suppose, that other story about him was false, too," she said presently.

"No, they say that was all true. But it was a little thing, after all : and I don't think we ought to be always remembering it. I have made up my mind never to say another word against him ; it isn't Christian-like, nor charitable."

Christie did not fully appreciate this praiseworthy resolution ; she was lost in regretful thought. She hadn't minded it so much, at first, but lately, it had troubled her ; she wished more and more that he hadn't done it. Why, a baby of four years, would have run up with his small fist to strike a blow, in defence of his mother, and *he* must have been fifteen or sixteen at least ! One could easily forgive

grand, generous faults, — almost love them, — but *mean* ones, — that seemed to betray some baseness in the blood, these were the fatal flies in the most precious pot of ointment.

Just at this moment Christie's eyes were caught by a glitter and flash upon one of Christina's fingers.

"What a magnificent diamond!" she exclaimed. "Where *did* you get it?"

Christina threw herself back with a pretty air of mystery.

"Christina! Christina Winter!" broke in a querulous voice. "Where are you? I am very ill, very ill, indeed! Give me my drops."

Christina took the candle, and went in. In one minute she was back again.

"Christie!" she exclaimed.

Christie, drooping low over the fire, jumped up quickly; there was something so choked and unnatural in the voice. She was still more frightened at her cousin's face, — so white, and horror-stricken, — as she caught her tightly by the arm.

"What?" cried Christie, grasping the poker; her first fear being that Aunt Hopper had at last, "seen her thought outside her —."

crystallized into the long-coming man. "What! under the bed?"

"No!" gasped Christina. "Worse! You know what I was talking about. She's got it! All broken out in horrible spots. Where did I put my shawl?" she was crying now. "I am going right home. I don't care what time of night it is. My complexion is the greatest beauty I have. I am so young to be ruined for life. 'Fair, fair, and golden hair,'—that's what somebody said once; he would never say it again!"

Christina didn't seem to know what she was saying; she was at the door now, quite wild with terror.

"And what shall *I* do?" cried Christie, catching the infection!" and clinging to her nervously.

"O, whatever you please. I'll wait a minute for you, if you'll hurry."

"But old Hannah hasn't come back; she must be going to stay till morning; and Uncle Hopper is just as useless as the bed-post," said Christie, in great perplexity.

"Say quick!" cried Christina, irritably. "I can't stay arguing all night."

"No, then!" said Christie desperately.

"And I don't dare go alone," sobbed Christina, "it is so frightfully dark and late. O, I'll tell you,—I might stay in the blue room till morning; that might be safe, with every window open."

This happy thought was put in immediate execution, and Christie stood alone and irresolute in the sitting-room.

"Water, Christina, don't you hear me?" cried Aunt Hopper. "Water! I am burning up."

Christie took the candle, and peeped cautiously through the door. Yes, it was true! Even at that distance, she could plainly see Aunt Hopper's face, red, spotted, horrible.

Christie hastily retreated; her very soul was sick; as she told Tom afterwards, her "John" fainted dead away.

Aunt Hopper, in half delirium, applied moral hartshorn, something after this fashion.

"No, they won't bring it, and I am in chains. 'Sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.'"

Christie started, she tried to shut her ears, but John was wide awake now. The old question flashed before her as if written in fire.

"What hast thou done for Me?"

Here was another of those grand, glorious chances. She did not dare reject it. Very solemnly, with wide open eyes, she accepted it.

Taking the precaution to tie her handkerchief over her nose and mouth, she carried the precious water to Aunt Hopper, and bravely raised her while she drank it. She did even more, she laid a wet cloth on the hot, aching head, not once, but two or three times, during the longest, dreariest night she had ever known. Very hasty little visits they were to be sure, and she spent most of the time between, crying. Aunt Hopper would open her eyes now and then, in a confused, wondering way, but Christie couldn't tell whether she knew her or not.

Once, in her anxiety, she had tried to rouse Uncle Hopper, but it was a failure. Having been broken of rest for a week, he had, this night, taken a sleeping-powder, and she could get nothing farther from him than the assurance that Aunt Hopper wouldn't do any thing that wasn't right; she was "a good woman, and knew her sphere." The argument evidently being, that a woman who knew her sphere, wouldn't think of having a severe illness, when

she came to know that it was against her husband's wishes.

So Christie kept her lonely vigils ; but with the very earliest dawn, she hailed a small boy, and sent him for the doctor.

"It isn't the real small pox ? I suppose," asked Christie, anxiously, as he stood beside the bed. She had followed no farther than the door, where she stood hugging a bottle of camphor. "Aunt Hopper must have been vaccinated."

Aunt Hopper's sharp, keen eyes flashed open a minute, but Christie did not see it ; she was wondering at the smile twinkling and wrinkling all over the good old doctor's pleasant face.

"So you thought it was small-pox ?" he said, patting her head ; while his eyes softened a little. "And stuck by her, all night, just the same ? Come, now, that's a girl after my own heart. And you needn't be a bit afraid of having that pretty face all marked up, because—" here he laughed outright,—“they don't catch small-pox from *erysipelas*."

Erysipelas ! It was only when the relief came that Christie knew at what high pressure her nerves had been working all night. She

sat right down, feeling very shaky indeed. But presently, she managed to get up to Christina with the good news.

"Don't come in," shrieked Christina. "You've been in that horrid air all night. So absurd in you. Such a malignant case. I am going right home. There, Christie, I'll never forgive you as long as I live!"

For Christie, possessed with the spirit of mischief had embraced her cousin, warmly, and had thrown over her shoulders a little shawl of Aunt Hopper's, which she had caught up on the way. She repented as soon as she saw Christina's genuine pallor, and hastened to inform her that only the harmless sheep, erysipelas, had lain under this frightful wolf-skin.

"Erysipelas," repeated Christina, with a blank, disgusted face. "Why didn't I think of that? and she has had it before. Did she — did she seem to miss me?"

"I don't really think she did," said Christie generously. "She was so confused, and the light was dim. She is rousing a little now, I think. Perhaps you had better come down. No," she continued, reading a question in Christie's face, "*I will never tell her.*"

Christina Winter kissed Christie Hammond for the first time since they were babies together. She said not a word ; but the action was eloquent. It meant a great deal from Christina.

As for Christie, no revenge that she could possibly have taken for the malice that robbed her of Aunt Hopper's favor, could have brought any thing of the sweetness of this moment. God had accepted this little flower of self-renunciation.

Aunt Hopper's illness proved far more serious than was at first thought. There were even some days when the issue seemed doubtful ; and the convalescence was very long and tedious.

Christie going up almost every day, learned a great many lessons. Once she overheard a quaint conversation between Uncle Hopper and old Mrs. Crum. The old gentleman had just thrown down his magazine in a pet.

"Well, I suppose I mustn't complain that there's no respect for old age, when there's none for *any* of God's works."

"What now ?" asked Mrs. Crum, sympathizingly.

"Why, they've got a new-fangled thing,

called a specterscope — or some such unwholesome name — and they pretend to say that, give 'em a streak of light, and they'll tell you just what kind of a place it's come from. Would you believe it now, they stick to it there's iron in the sun !”

“Do tell !” said Mrs. Crum.

“Yes, and all kinds of metals scattered loose all about among the stars. How they dare go prying about into such things, I don't know ! Not a bit of reverence left. No time to take off your shoes now-a-days. Give those fellows a sight of the burning bush, or the light on Moses' face, and they'd have gone to squintin' at it through that sassy instrument, and telling you whether there was any iron in Heaven !”

Mrs. Crum was duly shocked.

“Well, I'm getting old, I'm getting old,” said Uncle Hopper, in a very different tone, dropping his head on his cane. “It's time for me to be gone.”

“Not so very old either,” interposed cheerful Mrs. Crum. “*I* think we're just drawin' near our youth. That's the way to look at it. Why, bless you, only think of Abram and Jacob, goin' on their third or fourth thousand

year, at the very least! We'll be but mere babies, after all, when we get to Heaven."

Uncle Hopper had only a faint smile. "Yes, but I can't help a feeling that I'm in the way down *here*. The young people *crowd* me."

Christie winked her eyes very hard. She wouldn't have believed it possible that Uncle Hopper could be so humble and sad. It was very queer! and presently, it grew so oppressively queer, that she ran to warm his slippers, and pick up his spectacles. From that time, Christie never again *crowded* Uncle Hopper.

Again, another day, when *Aunt* Hopper was at her worst, Christie heard her saying—

"I'm going now, Betsy. It will be all over by night. O, it's a very solemn thing!"

"One gets a little courage," said sunshiny Mrs. Crum, "rememberin' who went into Paradise with the blessed Jesus."

"Yes, but he was *only* a thief, and I—" Aunt Hopper quite broke down.

So Christie's heart softened day by day. How could any one feel any thing but the tenderest pity for the poor, humble old couple, just trembling out of life?

But at last the happy time arrived when Christie could say —

“I do not think I need come to-morrow, Aunt, you are so much better, and there are so many things to do at home.”

“Very well, child. I am much obliged to you for what you’ve done. I don’t know your motive. I’ve told you often enough you would never be a penny — ”

“Yes, Aunt,” Christie interrupted, hastily buttoning her sacque. “Good-bye.”

But Aunt Hopper held her hand, detaining her.

“Christina, ‘do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?’ ”

Christie laughed a little; she quite understood her.

“Suppose Aunt, that what they took for thorns and thistles, turned out, when they got close up, to be a scraggy kind of grape-vine, after all?”

Aunt Hopper nodded her head, with a smile not quite so severe as usual.

“Very good. That is *possible*, I will think of it.”

But Mrs. Crum, delighted beyond measure, followed her favorite out.

"How it grows dear!" she exclaimed, smiling all over, (which of course, in Mrs. Crum's case, made a most liberal allowance of smile.) "Never saw a more forrard child. Haven't had a chance before to speak about that first night when she was took,—he gave up creepin' then, Christie, and started off *walkin'*. All alone, too, without catchin' on to nobody."

## CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN TALKS.

*Christie to Tom.*

“Nov. 5.

“‘The chill November comes at last,  
Beneath a veil of rain ;  
The night wind blows its folds aside,—  
Her face is full of pain.’

**B**EG your pardon, dear old boy, for introducing this ‘lone, lorn creetur,’ but the fact is, I feel as if we were *twins*. Look upon *her*, and you will see your sister Christie. Things have gone so very ‘contrairy’ with me lately !

“Yesterday, Tom,—I would only confess it to you,—Emma Brown came to see me, and those dreadful stories have come home again to roost. Such a time as I had, too, trying to act on the advice of that literary friend ! I laid about right and left, in such a perfectly relentless, cold-blooded way, that I think the

(255)

publishers have grave suspicions of my being a safe member of society. Well, I am not dead yet. Did you ever read about that German astronomer who wanted to find out something about the sun's periods? For thirty years that proud monarch never once made his morning toilet, without finding a little tube pointed at him, and that German's eye behind it! Wasn't that a splendid impertinence?

"All this is to prepare you for the almost incredible fact that *I* am going to try again. This will only make the seventh time, and perhaps I ought not to have expected the walls to give way before that. By the way, upon reading my bible, (which is a very good thing to do, now and then,) I find that I have been rather mixing up Gideon and Joshua, in my attack upon Jericho. Never mind; I shall need all the strategy and patience of both leaders in *this* siege; so I shall still take Gideon's lamps and pitchers, while I go up Joshua's seven times. But how I do work!

"I have become on very intimate terms with twelve, and one, and two o'clock, lately, and my opinion is that *midnight* has been slandered. All the roosters wake up just then, and ask you how you do, in the heartiest, cheeriest manner. It is

a very pleasant, social time, compared to that single, solemn *one*, which is the real skeleton hour—the thinnest and most shivery of all the night.

“Do you want to know where I am sending my last venture? The package is lying before me now, directed to ‘Messrs. Leek & Drippe,’ of the *Berlin Dipper*. Rather a come-down from the *Grand Trunk*, you will think; but I am not above making a stepping-stone of them; and if I only get paid for the paper and candles I have wasted, it will be something.

“O, Tom, why won’t the public like my heroes? I get so interested in them myself, that I can’t sleep; and as for *eating*,—there might as well be sawdust set before me, as beef and pudding, for any consciousness I have of taste. It is a pity sawdust isn’t nourishing, or this fact might be turned to economical uses.

“And then I’m afraid I’m a great trial to mother. To be sure I do most of my writing at night, but I can’t keep my people out of my head during the day. She sends me to the kitchen for something, and half-way to the door, I get a thought, or the thought gets *me*, and I stand and stare at the knob till everybody laughs. And yesterday, O, Tom, I did such a miserable thing! Mother set me to watching

the biscuits, while Jane went on an errand. I looked at them once, and they were just beginning to puff up. So I sat down on the wash-tub to decide a very pressing matter,—whether my hero should perish in a burning house from which he had just rescued Mrs. Rogers and eight small children,—(died going back for the *ninth*,) or whether he should go down in a dreadful storm at sea. I decided on the latter, Tom. I had him help the last woman and child into the boats, filled almost to swamping. I had him go back grandly to his post, saying, ‘I cannot go until I am relieved.’ Then the ship settled, reeled, grew dizzy,—there was a swirl—a horrible vortex of black rushing water! and—

“‘Christie,’ cried mother, hurrying out, ‘is any thing burning?’

“If there could have been any thing worse than mother’s mentioning biscuits at that supreme moment, it was finding that they were no longer biscuits, but coals—black coals! I was almost sure I had just turned away from the oven, but, come to look at the clock, I had been sitting there more than twenty minutes.

“But do you suppose that best of mothers scolded me Tom? She only looked at me in a kind of sorry way, and said,

“‘Hadn’t you better tell me all about it, Christie?’

“She is so sharp, mother is. She knows I have something on my mind, that there’s something going on. But she didn’t urge me, when she found I wasn’t quite ready to tell it. She is so different from most people, Tom; the goodness they keep for Sundays, she wears every day.

“‘Her mirth, her dreams, her very cares,  
Are more in Heaven than other women’s prayers.’

“There! I’m sure she would consider that handsome tribute cheaply purchased with a pan of biscuits.

“But how very glad I shall be when I *can* tell her! Such a delicious moment if success ever comes! and how could I bear life, if it didn’t? Papa takes our troubles harder and harder every day. I don’t know how I ever can be happy, unless my brains can in some way find what my tongue lost.

“Lu Davison had a large party last week, but I didn’t go. Did you ever notice Tom, that in all the stories in the *Berlin Dipper*, the heroines,—no matter how poor they are,—always go to large parties in cream-colored satins, and soft velvets, with a piece of priceless point-less running around the neck and sleeves? They always

find it, just at the last minute, up in the garret, in an old trunk, come down from some luxurious grandmother ; and, ten chances to one, there's a necklace of rubies or emeralds thrown in, that an empress might have envied. And then they always go and stand around regally, with 'an air of scorn and world-weariness.'

"Well, there's nothing of the kind in our garret, and — that tells the whole story. I was afraid the air of scorn and world-weariness might not be quite so attractive in connection with a frayed old tarlatan. So I stayed at home, very cheerfully, Tom. O, remarkably jolly !

"Why do you keep asking about Harvey Davison ? Of *course* he is polite and gentlemanly as ever ; how could he be otherwise ? There has been a fatality, though, about my meeting him ; he is almost sure to call when I am out. Sometimes I *have* thought — but no, I won't say it. The worst thing about being poor is, that it makes one suspicious and unjust, ready to take offence and imagine slights. I suppose I have expected too much. Mamma says, one half our suffering in this world, is because people do not show that regard for us, which we think is fairly due to our merits. That may be, but I am fast finding out my true place. Pov-

erty seems to me like a cold wind that blows away all illusions between people, and then, if you are not very sure of your friend, you had better shut your eyes. It is dreadful to look straight at a bare soul !

“ Belle and I are drifting farther and farther apart ; we hardly speak to each other now. I have not once been in her house since she came to see me, just after papa's misfortune. She only came from curiosity, I know, and she put on such important airs, as much as to say, ‘ Two shillings has no right to an opinion when Half-Dollar is in the room.’ There, Tom, you needn't say a word, I see it just as plain as you do. I've tried that bridling business faithfully enough, but every little while that unruly member manages to slip the halter and run away. I'm tired and discouraged, and almost ready to give up the whole struggle. I've been having a terrible attack, lately, of the old longing for some of the lower forms of happiness, a selfish pity for the old Christie. Sometimes it seems as if even Heaven itself could not quite make up for some of the things missed in this life. Christie so longs for music,—not necessarily sacred music; and beautiful pictures,—not necessarily pictures of saints and angels; and O, ever so many

other things, which I suppose she will never have. I am almost as sorry for her as Jack is for *his* worser half.

“By the way, Jack is about the best friend I have. One of those days when I was so very busy making splashes and blots of ink on wasted paper,—my very soul growing round-shouldered,—he took all the stockings, (*my* work you know,) and darned them for me. No small job I can tell you, and the poor fellow had done them beautifully,—like a fine embroidery. It must have taken him two days, at least, and I’m sure I don’t know how he ever learned. Then he brought them to me with his gloves on,—that’s such an odd notion of his,—and was so more than satisfied when I thanked him a little. He is a daily rebuke to me, so patient, and self-denying; he would be almost perfect if it were not for that old grudge against Mr. Greyson, which he seems unable to conquer. I cannot understand it, Mr. Greyson is always so thoroughly kind.

“I have rather avoided that last mentioned gentleman, lately, I have been afraid he would ask about my success, and I cannot bear to tell him. It would just kill me to see that little quiver at the corner of his mouth.

"Tom I'm afraid this hasn't been a very cheerful letter, but I haven't meant to repine. Mrs. Crum says—'God does so like us to be *contented*!' And truly, I mean to be.

"I can't help feeling, though, that I am not capable of very high attainment in any thing; and I'm not sure but I like to *grovel*, better. I have just been thinking if the choice were given me now, which would I rather see—an angel or a cat? And Tom, I would choose the *cat*! a sleepy, stupid, comfortable cat. What do you think of that?"

*Tom to Christie.*

"Think of it, Kriss, my poor dear? Why I think you are tired through and through,—your very soul is tired—too tired to see your high-born kinsmen. You are not able to sit up for such grand company. By all means look at the cat; she is just the society you need at present, and worth a quart bottle of paregoric.

"What a poor worn-out Kriss it was! So weak, she began to see double. So there are *two* John-Jacks in the family, and only a small fraction of Christie is going to Heaven! I may be all wrong, but I don't see why all pure and innocent desires and longings shouldn't be thor-

oughly satisfied in that happy place. The idea of being so afraid to give up our little daubs and discords here, and not being *sure* God has something a great deal better for us ! Professor Garrett, — my favorite, you know, — says he thinks we are going to be greatly astonished when we get through looking through a glass darkly, — when we come within hearing of

“ ‘The *shout* of them that triumph,  
The *song* of them that feast !’

“But we are not there yet ; and as I don’t want *you* to get there a great way ahead of me, — I must begin to take better care of you. I am coming home at Christmas to see how matters stand. I did want very much to finish my education. It seems now, as if I had only gotten on what the ‘Masons call the ‘scratch-coat,’ and I *would* like to go on to the ‘hard-finish.’ But if father thinks there is any better or quicker way of helping you all, I am ready to give it up.

“About Belle Houghton, I must confess to taking some satisfaction in your bad little speeches. Since mother wrote me about Uncle and Aunt Hopper — that you were really beginning to *love* them, or acting as if you did — I have been in quite a state of alarm. If now, you had opened your mouth in wisdom, and disclosed the

law of kindness under your tongue,—I should have come home in the next train. This is the very last attainment you know. ‘If any man offend not in *word*, the same is a perfect man.’ When one is perfect, there is no further need of discipline, and — ! It is comforting to think you are not in immediate danger of translation.

“But I cannot bear to have my dear Christie vexed or slighted in any way. I am quick-tempered, you know. It has been necessary to pin up by *my* glass—

“‘You should forgive many things in others, but nothing in yourself.’

“‘Many things’ are not *all* things, however, and about one little matter I feel the very reverse of amiability, I can tell you. I should like to bring a railing accusation against *somebody*; but if Michael, the archangel didn’t dare do it,—under probably somewhat greater provocation,—perhaps I hadn’t better.

“Belle’s case, however, doesn’t look to me quite so bad. If you haven’t been to see her in so long, don’t you think she has some reason for hard feelings? Depend upon it there is some little misunderstanding at the bottom of it all. Why don’t you go and have a good plain talk—step over the brook while it is yet shallow? As

for that disagreeable manner, it may not have come from pride. People often 'put on airs,' I think from awkwardness and embarrassment. Belle always seemed to me like a simple good-hearted girl, and I believe a few kind words would make every thing right. It is worth trying at any rate; they say, 'anger kept too long will always ferment into *hatred*.'

"I'll tell you another thought that just struck me, Christie. If we were soon going to France, we would try to learn the French language. If we were expecting to spend the rest of our days in China, we would begin acquiring the Chinese tongue. So if you and I are going to Heaven, don't you think it would be wise to give ourselves a little more practice in the language of the country? It isn't very much spoken down here, to be sure; but when it is, you will find that people understand it much quicker than most foreign tongues. The reason lies in the construction of the language—no sentence can be considered perfect that doesn't agree with, and isn't governed by, the great law of Love."

Christie sat a long time, listlessly holding Tom's letter in her hand.

"It is *right*," she exclaimed at last, "here is

that infallible rule again. I once thought, having found this clue to the mystery of life, that I could never again go wandering aimlessly about—I should always know just what to do. And I *do* know, but that doesn't make it any easier. Tom hasn't the least idea how hard such things are for a girl. To go to Belle's beautiful house— There, I won't begin to pity myself. I believe I am strong enough to *choose*, whether I like it or not, and I *will* go."

She ran for her hat, afraid to give herself any more time to think. On the way she met Christina Winter.

"Do you know you are getting shockingly pale and thin?" she said. "What do you think Belle Houghton said about you last Sunday?"

Yes, Christie knew she was pale and thin, and last Sunday, in church, it had occurred to her that when she raised her eyes a little, she must look very like St. Augustine, in that beautiful picture, when he sat by the open window in Africa, looking up with such a rapt, holy expression. She had noticed that Belle was looking at her; she wondered if it had struck her too.

"She said," pursued Christina Winter, "she said she didn't believe you had nourishing food! Wasn't that hateful?"

Christie colored deeply, in a very sudden revulsion of feeling.

"She did, did she? Well, it hasn't quite come to that," cried she indignantly. "I hope you relieved her mind."

And then in spite of herself, she laughed a little. It had been such a contrast to her thoughts—such a very good joke on herself, she almost forgot to be angry in a sense of the humor of the thing.

"What an odd girl you are, Christie," said her cousin in some displeasure. "Now *I* quite resented this as we were relations. But if you don't know when you are insulted, I shan't trouble myself any farther. If you had a bit of spirit, I should think you would hardly feel as if you could speak to her again."

"Well, I don't feel much like it, that's a fact," said Christie hesitating, as Christina went her way.

"Perhaps she didn't say it," suggested Christie's John, "and if she did, it might have been more in awkward sympathy, than malice."

"I think I will wait till some other time though," said Christie, brightening. "There is really something I ought to be doing for mamma, this afternoon."

But "John" had grown very alert; there was no use trying to hide from him, even behind a good-sized virtue.

"Through the pass of By-and-by, you go to the valley of *Never!*" quoted this clear-sighted partner.

There was really no use struggling with him, and Christie went on with what resignation she could. Her last hope — that Belle might be out — deserted her, as the servant answered the bell; and presently she found herself sitting on the delicate blue brocade sofa, in the Houghton's newly-furnished parlor, just opposite a grand mirror, in which she saw herself very small and shabby, looking much like a new-fledged chimney swallow.

"It is a hundred times harder than washing the baby," she said, with a little nervous laugh. "I feel as if I were the gridiron come to call on the silver vase. O, John, you must certainly be growing stronger, or you never could have dragged Christie here in this old dress and hat!"

But now there was a rustle of silk, and Belle appeared, apologizing, as Christie knew she would,—for the dress that was far finer than Christie's own.

The call began with great constraint on both

sides ; but gradually Christie's frank, open nature triumphed, and when at last she arose to go, Belle said with something very like cordiality,

"Don't wait so long, again, Christie."

"No, but I got an idea that you didn't care to see me—were hurt, angry about something ?"

Belle hesitated. "Perhaps I was a little. I did hear some things that you said —"

"Could you tell me what ? Perhaps I could explain —"

Belle colored a little. "Well, the first thing was, that you said 'most of my relations were *idiots*.' And you didn't know whether I *was* one of the millionnaires, but it was very true that I *gave* myself a million airs. But never mind, I don't half believe you ever said them."

It was now Christie's turn to color. "Yes, I did, Belle !" said she hastily, "or something very like it. But I didn't really mean it. I was only trying to be clever and brilliant. I have been very foolish. But you must try to forgive me, Belle, I, too, have heard things—"

"I suppose you have," said Belle, frankly, "I haven't been any too careful, I know. Suppose we call them cancelled, and begin again ? That is, all but *one* thing,—if you only didn't say *that*." Belle's color grew very vivid, now.

"What?"

"That—that I was content to take 'a dish warmed over at the feast of life.'"

"I don't understand," said Christie, with a look of genuine perplexity.

"Yes, you meant—why you said 'a dish warmed over,' that I was willing to put up with—that you had had the first—well," finished Belle desperately, "you *know* you meant Harvey Davison!"

"Never!" cried Christie, with cheeks as flaming as Belle's. It was a very new thing to her. "I never said it," she repeated, "and I never had any reason to say it. I hope you will believe this."

"Yes, I will!" said Belle heartily, with an air of great relief. "You always told the truth. And Christie, I have always liked you better than the other girls, but I have been afraid of you—you were so much quicker and brighter than I, and said such sharp things. But you have seemed very different lately; I have thought of it ever since the day we met you up by Mrs. Barnes. I think you are leading a nobler life than the rest of us. I wish we could be friends, and you would help me sometimes."

Christie could have asked for no greater re-

ward than this. She had always felt uneasy when she remembered Mr. Barret. It was almost like a token of forgiveness, to find that her influence with Belle, had not wholly been for evil.

"And this is the girl I thought so cold and purse-proud!" she said, walking home, with her heart in a glow from Belle's last embrace. "I went out to meet an enemy, and found a friend. John!" she finished gaily — "You have made a capital beginning, and you shall talk more; you must practice every day, till you don't make any mistakes in this beautiful foreign tongue."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CROSS OF THE LEGION OF HONOR.



CHRISTIE was going down to Berlin. It was about the time she expected to hear from Leek & Drippe, and she had written to Emma to keep the letter till she came. It might have been there two or three days already; and she could hardly restrain her impatience at the thought. She felt that the decision must be favorable, she had prayed for it so.

Her father had been home two or three days, with an alarming pain in his head. As Christie passed the sitting-room door, on her way out, she heard his feeble voice.

"I am like a tree that has been girdled. I have had my death-blow; it is only a question of time."

And then she heard some farther alarming words, about "foreclosing the mortgage," and leaving the dear old home. "Yes, we'll all be

turned out in a month, if I can't find some friend to help us. I have thought some of speaking to Greyson —"

"Don't cry, cousin," said John-Jack, just behind her, as usual. "I guess you'll get it."

"What?" asked Christie, looking at him sharply.

"Jack knows you want something, Jack sees it. He gets John to speak to God about it every day; he gets up very early, and asks Him a great while—'Give cousin what she wants. Give cousin what she wants.'"

"You dear, good Jack!" cried Christie, greatly touched; while she wondered at the poor fellow's delicate, true instincts.

But she felt a little thrill of encouragement. Surely God would hear this simple child-prayer. He would not disappoint her now. She would come back to-night, with something delicious to tell them all. Something which would be but the beginning of good things—the nest-egg of fortune.

On the way to the cars, she met Christina and Mr. Greyson riding together, laughing and talking in great gaiety and good-humor. Mr. Greyson checked his horses at sight of her.

"I cannot stop," she said coldly. "I am

going to Berlin," and she hurried on. "I must be horribly selfish," she said, a minute after, curiously inspecting a little bright drop fallen on the sleeve of her sacque. "I cannot even bear to give any one a share in my friends."

She had been too much occupied all the way, to notice that Jack was following her. It was only in the depot that she discovered him, and knew unmistakably,—by the adornment of the scarlet bow,—that he had designs of accompanying her.

"That couldn't be, Jacky," she said kindly, but firmly. And now that I think of it, I wish you wouldn't come to meet me to-night."

She had some vague design,—when the long expected money reached her hands,—of buying Jack the pair of boots he so much needed. And she thought she would like to surprise him, bring them to his door with a nice little note, just as he had done about the gloves. She would buy them on the way home, she knew just the store.

"So don't come, Jacky!" she repeated. "Remember I *forbid* it."

And she sprang lightly into the cars, without having noticed the disappointment and pain, spreading blankly over poor Jack's face.

"The *Berlin Dipper* must be out this very morning," she said, with a little thrill, as the train rushed away. "Perhaps, O, very probably, one of my articles may be in it. Why not?"

She had worked so very hard, the great cold Public *must* be touched. She had done her very uttermost; these last new trumpets truly gave no uncertain sound; it only remained for the *people* to shout "with a great shout," and the walls would fall down flat.

And so this small Joshua, with two scarlet banners flaming in her cheeks, went up valiantly for the result of the seventh compassing of Jericho.

When the passengers were taking their places in the afternoon train from Berlin, a quiet little body, with face closely tied in a gray veil, took her seat in a corner and persistently looked out of the window. In one hand was held tightly a crushed bit of paper—a few brief lines bearing the signature of "Leek and Drippe." The cars rattled and hummed the words over and over with dreary monotony, while the trees and fences raced away from the growing despair of the little gray face.

"The poem has striking thoughts," hummed the wheels, "but is rather deficient in rhythm.

We discovered great excellences in all the articles, but did not find them quite suitable for the pages of our magazine."

"Christie," said a voice near her, "Isn't this Christie Hammond?"

She had been afraid somebody would speak to her; and here was Mr. Anthon taking the very seat beside her. She turned, trying to answer him cheerfully, and in the very effort, surprised him by bursting into tears.

"No," she cried quickly, answering his look of alarm, "Nobody sick, nor dying—I am quite ashamed—It is just a little trouble of my own."

"A *little* trouble, Christie?" he asked, studying the flushed face with kindly interest.

Christie made an attempt at smiling which ended in utter failure. "No, not a little trouble to *me*. I can't tell you what it is; but it is a very, *very* great disappointment, I hardly know how to bear it; and I don't see why it had to happen," she turned away quickly.

"Why as near as I can find out," cried Mr. Anthon, in the cheeriest tone, "Christie has been receiving an honor. You always liked honors I believe," he said smiling.

Christie nodded, a little bewildered. "Al-

ways, of all kinds, earthly and heavenly. Most people do, don't they ? ”

“ Which do you like best ? ” asked Mr. Anthon, smiling at her impulsive frankness.

“ I know which I *ought* to like best,” returned Christie, a little diverted. “ And some times I am sure I am all right. I have always remembered what you said once about God’s love so great that he would not make us slaves, nor even servants and friends, but ‘*sons*’ ; of course, there is no honor like that. It is too wonderful ! I can’t realize that it can ever possibly come to *me*.”

“ Wouldn’t it be pleasant to have some little *proof* that we had that honor ? ” said Mr. Anthon, musingly.

“ O, wouldn’t it ? ” cried Christie earnestly.

“ But I dare say, even if God had given any proof,—people are so strange, so ungrateful,—they would be sure to find fault with the manner of it.”

“ How could they ? ” cried Christie. “ How could they help being thankful, no matter how it was given.”

Mr. Anthon wrote a few words on a slip of paper, and placed it, smiling, before her. Christie read —

"Proof that we are *sons*."

"'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth *every* son whom He receiveth.'"

"'But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and *not sons*.'"

Christie saw it all — the sweet, solemn proof. But she did not say a word.

"Would you like to be without it, if you could take your choice?" said Mr. Anthon gently. "Wouldn't you be almost frightened if God had not sent you some trial or disappointment? Every *son* you know must have this proof and badge."

Still Christie couldn't speak.

"My little Christie has hoped for a great deal from the world," pursued Mr. Anthon, smiling, "she has been very eager for happiness and success; she has been ambitious, she would have liked to be decorated with stars and crosses." Christie wondered how he knew. "And instead she has had a great many trials, as I, myself, have seen. It is all a great mystery, she thinks. But what if she could hear the Father saying, '*There is a soul worth saving. There is one that I love. Give her the Cross of the Legion of Honor!*' Wouldn't

she take it cheerfully — I was going to say *joyfully*? Wouldn't she say triumphantly, 'I am one of the honored ones. I belong to God's Legion of Honor.'"

Christie slipped her hand in his, with a little struggling smile. "Thank you," said she, very heartily.

"And, little Christie, you are very young yet. I think — I am almost sure — that a great deal of *earthly* happiness is still in store for you. But if not — if you should be greatly honored with sorrow, as some have been — remember that this little life is very short after all. Think of it. What? only forty, fifty or seventy years to suffer, and then the sweet happiness of Heaven forever — for 'perpetual eternities!' It seems incredible. Only to be faithful this little while — 'unto death,' and then, in the presence of Gabriel and Michael, and the vast shining company, to be welcomed as one of the royal family — to receive the 'crown of life!'"

"If I could only get there!" exclaimed Christie earnestly. "I wouldn't ask for that. I have always thought I should feel uneasy with a crown."

"One cannot tell just what is meant by the

'crown,'" said Mr. Anthon, "but since Jesus saw fit to offer it, it must be something infinitely precious. I should be very sorry to miss it."

"And I, too," cried Christie quickly. "I did not think of that."

"But remember, Christie, none are admitted for this prize, but those who have first worn *patiently* upon their hearts, the fiery Cross of the Legion of Honor."

"Thank you, Mr. Anthon," cried Christie again with the brightest smile. "You have made it all seem so different. I will try to carry it patiently and cheerfully."

The train rushed screaming into the Millburgh depot. Mr. Anthon was engrossed by some friends; the crowd scattered rapidly in gay, chattering groups of twos and threes; and Christie came down from her brief enthusiasm, to an earthly anxiety to get home without speaking to any body. She was especially desirous to avoid two happy persons who had been up to see the new gallery of paintings in Berlin; they had been in the same car with her, but happily had not recognized her yet.

The depot was back on the hill; it was nearly a mile down to Millburgh, and as Christie went on, she suddenly felt her strength giving way.

She had scarcely touched a mouthful at breakfast, and in her excitement, had refused all Emma's hospitalities. Now the reaction had begun; the ground was swimming before her; but she must not fall. Those two people would soon be coming after her, and they would be so astonished and shocked, and Belle would be wondering again whether she had "nourishing food."

A few steps farther, at a turn of the road she came upon the ruins of an old hovel, long since deserted. One crazy angle was still standing; there was just room for her to hide—to lie down behind it, till all the tiresome, chattering people were past. Then she could creep home as slowly as she pleased.

No sooner said than done; and Christie, crouching low among the rubbish, waited patiently till the clatter of feet and voices had quite died away.

"They are all gone now," she said, but even as she spoke, came two more lingerers. How slowly they must have walked.

"And so you do not like the color of these gloves! That is enough; I shall never wear them again."

And through a chink in the time-worn boards,

Christie saw that he was drawing off the fresh new gloves. She also saw Belle's fluttered look of pleasure and embarrassment.

"O, Mr. Davison, don't throw them away! I didn't mean —"

"There was nothing else for me to do. A young lady whose taste is so perfect in every thing —"

The rest was lost, but Christie knew the ending very well.

"So that was all it meant," she said slowly. "Here is no 'head of gold,' nor 'breast of silver,' I have been bowing before an image of brass."

This was not an entirely new discovery, but the truth came home to her with a greater force just then — it seemed to add to the general bitterness and hollowness of every thing that dreary winter night.

She arose somewhat stiffly, and came forth from her hiding-place. Millburgh and home seemed so very far away as she looked across the fields. In all her happy after-life, Christie could never remember without a shiver, those solemn, barren wastes, with the snow — "dead drops of rain" — just beginning to fall through the leaden air.

She had only gone a few steps, when she heard sleigh-bells behind her. She tried to walk on briskly, but her feet seemed nailed as if in a nightmare. She stopped, leaning a little on the fence. Perhaps she wouldn't be noticed, it was growing dark so fast ; the blackness seemed to be sweeping over her in great, rushing waves. But no, the horse had stopped.

"Are you faint or ill, madam ? Shall I take you anywhere ?"

There was no mistaking that kind voice. Christie would have given worlds if she had not come out quite so soon. She shook her head without turning it, waving her hand with a little impatient gesture. She only hoped he would go on. But instead, he jumped hastily out of the sleigh, and came towards her with a quick exclamation.

"Why, Christie ! Why, little Christie, is it possible !"

And numb, helpless, quite unable to speak, she felt herself lifted in a pair of strong arms.

At the same moment a tall awkward figure arose from behind a heap of snow, and looked eagerly after them, as they turned back to the station.

"Jack would have done it," he cried ex


citedly. "Jack would have carried her all the way. But she said 'no, don't come Jack, I forbid it, Jack.' She didn't want *Jack*."

"Hush! go home now," cried the stern John. "Getting angry, are you? Hush, not another word!"

And wringing his hands, with an exceeding bitter cry—"Poor Jack! Nobody wants Jack!" he went striding across the barren fields.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE FEET OF CLAY.

HOULD think you would have froze, mum," said the ticket master, the only occupant of the deserted station. "Did you drop right down in the road? Strange nobody saw ye. Train's been in nigh on to an hour."

"I'm sure I don't see how *I* could have missed you," said Mr. Greyson. "I came up five minutes after the train was in. You must have been making a call on the gnomes underground."

Christie's eyes filled a little, as she sipped the hot, spiced mixture, which Mr. Greyson had insisted on her drinking. She had been a little bewildered when she first came to herself, but now all the dreariness and disappointment came rushing back.

"What is it, Christie?" asked Mr. Greyson, watching her anxiously. "Is there any thing

that can be done? Let your old friend do it, if there is."

Christie forced a smile. "No, I am only very foolish. It is nothing."

But Mr. Greyson still looked at her, with the least little lifting of his eyebrows.

"I suppose I may as well tell you then," cried Christie, desperately. "You always find out everything. There! I suppose you will never think so highly of me again." She held out the letter from "Leek & Drippe."

"This is delightful!" said Mr. Greyson, glancing over it.

"To have me so disappointed?" said Christie, impatiently.

"You have joined such a large and distinguished company," he smiled — "The very best people the world has ever known, have failed in something utterly and hopelessly, at some time in their lives."

"I don't see how they ever got over it," said Christie huskily. "I think it's a dreadful thing."

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Greyson. "Failing? Where's the great harm? Every day brings a little dose of the opium of Time. We will forget it, and try something better. For my part, I am far from inconsolable over this failure."

Christie looked up reproachfully. "Selfish, I suppose," he said smiling. "I was hardly ready to have you give up all your best self to the public. It has always seemed to me that a woman must have a very large, strong nature, who, after hours given to literary effort, has much life, sweetness, or patience left to make *home* genial and bright. I may be mistaken, Christie?"

Christie shook her head, remembering remorsefully, her sharp words to Jack, and the many things left undone, which ought to have been done during the past few weeks.

"Besides I do not think a literary life a happy one, as a general thing. There are so few who achieve any success worth having. The work is poorly paid; there are endless struggles and disappointments. And even if you were successful, it has never seemed to me that you were one of the little women, who would be satisfied to join the lonely band that sit—

‘On winter nights by solitary fires,  
And hear the nations praising them far off.’

I believe there are sweeter things in life than even writing a successful book."

"Plain sewing, for instance," thought Christie, a little bitterly. "I think that is all that is left for *me*."

"Shall we go now?" said Mr. Greyson.  
"Are you quite warm?"

He helped her into the sleigh, wrapping the robes carefully about her. The horse walked slowly down the hill.

"Then if you were I," said Christie slowly.  
"You would give up trying to write?"

"I think I would," said Mr. Greyson. "You have a fine appreciation of what is highest and noblest in literature, your ideal would be high, and failing to reach it, you would make yourself unhappy. Forgive me, but the dear little wren would kill itself, trying to sing like a nightingale."

Christie heaved a long sigh as much of relief as pain; and that weary struggle and ambition died out of her life forever.

"'I am not able to drink the sea,'" she quoted, humbly. "'I ought,—and I am willing,—to content myself with a drop of dew.'"

"Well, one good turn deserves another," said Mr. Greyson, "I would like to ask *your* advice now, about a little matter of mine. Mrs. Fellowes has very suddenly broken up house-keeping — gone to live with her sister Mrs. Steele — and I am thrown out of a home. I never did fancy hotel life, but as I cannot hear of any pri-

vate boarding place, I do not see what else I can do, unless — I get married."

Christie gave a little, involuntary start. Married? She did not think it was coming so soon.

"And I have been thinking a great deal lately, of some one I have always admired, and whose character has developed beautifully during the last year; she has grown more patient and unselfish, and full of the charity that thinketh no evil. Does my true little friend guess whom I mean?"

"Christina?"

"Yes, Christina. What do you think of her?"

Christie had thought she was not willing to spare Christina a share of her *friend*. Just at this minute, she made another discovery.

The night wind came very chilly across the flats; she shivered a little.

"I think you are right," she said, without any perceptible pause. "Christina has changed very much lately."

"But do you think she would ever like *me* in that way?"

"You might ask her," said Christie, the least sharpness in her tone.

"That occurred to me," said he quietly, "and

I acted upon the suggestion. I did ask her to-day, but she hasn't given me an answer. I am afraid there is something in the way. I think I once overheard her, saying there was something I had done, which she could never forgive."

"No," said Christie, determined to be just, "that was *I*. She said it wouldn't make any difference to *her*."

"It *would* to you then?"

Christie hesitated. "I wish you hadn't asked me. Yes, it would!" she finished with desperate frankness.

Mr. Greyson suddenly stopped the horse.

"You must tell me what it is, Christie," he said, "before we drive into Millburgh."

"Must?" began Christie, defiantly—

"Yes, *must*," repeated Mr. Greyson. And under the fire—the compelling force of his earnest eyes, she felt herself growing helpless; she could do nothing but obey.

The little page of history which Christie supplied, was very bungling and incoherent, but some atonement was made for the defect, by vivid illuminations in crimson.

"There, the most absurd thing in the world, you see," said she, hurrying to a close. "Of course it is simply impossible that you could

have been in the next room, and not flown at the wretch and torn him to pieces. Forgive me that I ever listened to it a minute."

"But it *was* true, Christie, only perhaps a little worse. I was in the *same* room, and I never stirred! It was one of the most painful memories of my life."

Christie was astonished beyond measure. She looked at him fixedly a moment, and the gray light was still strong enough to show her the lines of pain deepening in his face. But she had no pity for him. She turned away grievously disappointed. No matter how faultless his after-life had been, she felt that this cowardice stood like a cold shadow between them, and in its chill breath all the fine gold had become dim.

"Yes, it was true," repeated Mr. Greyson. "But why do you turn away your head? Look at me, little Christie; I have something more to say."

Christie turned to meet that half sad, half-satirical smile.

"There was a little more of the story—something scarcely worth mentioning," he said. "I suppose nobody took the trouble to add the unimportant fact that I had just passed the crisis of typhoid fever—that I was more helpless

than a baby a day old — that I could not have lifted my hand to my head, to have saved my life ! ”

“ O, was that it ? How wicked ! How malicious ! ” cried Christie, indignantly, “ I will never believe evil of any one again, as long as I live.”

“ Will this make any difference ? ” said Mr. Greyson taking up the reins again, “ Will it make any difference to — ”

“ Christina ? ” finished Christie, in nervous haste, “ She didn’t mind it so much as I, you know. But I think she will be glad. I will tell her.”

“ There is one thing more that is unfortunate,” pursued Mr. Greyson. “ I believe she has an idea that I am very old — old enough to be her father.”

“ O, no, cried upright Christie, but with a shade of weariness. It occurred to her that even Mr. Greyson could be stupid and tiresome sometimes, as well as other people. “ No, Christina never said that. That was some of *my* foolishness again ; you surely must remember. It is of a piece with all the rest. I feel old enough to-night,” she tried to laugh, “ so

old — so old — I think I might be your grandmother ! ”

“ From a daughter to a grandmother, that’s a long jump,” laughed Mr. Greyson. “ I wish you wouldn’t be quite so ambitious — if you would only be willing to stop somewhere between ! ”

They had driven up to the door ; he was helping her from the sleigh.

“ Anywhere you please,” replied Christie, languidly.

His grasp tightened on the small hand he was holding. “ You don’t know what you are saying, little Christie. What if I should hold you to the bargain ? ”

Christie looked up, wondering at the tremor in his voice.

“ There was one thing more I wanted to tell you about Christina — ” he began.

“ Some other time,” faltered Christie, “ I am very tired to-night.”

“ To be sure you are ! ” he cried, pulling the bell. “ I am a brute to forget it. Besides I do not know that you will ever care to hear what I have to tell. I am going away Christie for three days, on business ; but when I come back may I — ”

The door burst open. "O, Christie!" began little Dump, "Mamma has been so worried. And papa can't sit still, 'cos Aunt Hopper has been here waiting for you, O, ever so long!"

"Good-night then Christie," said Mr. Greyson, yet still he lingered. "But when I come back may I tell you—" he bent very low to whisper it,—"may I tell you—Christina's *other name?*"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### JOHN-CHRISTIE'S EARNINGS.



CHRISTIE rushed up the stairs with cheeks on fire, and head in a whirl.

All the while a pair of hungry, sad eyes had been watching from the upper hall window. They confronted her now on the landing.

"Cousin, did our Father give it to you?"

"Yes, Jacky," said Christie excitedly, "all that I wanted — more than I dreamed."

Jack had the pained, vacant look he often wore, when something was beyond his feeble grasp.

"What? Down to Berlin, Cousin?" he asked eagerly.

"No," she hesitated, with a happy little laugh. "No, after I got home. I hope you will always pray for me, you good kind Jacky!"

Jack started, shrank a little, and then stole noiselessly away.

"Christie!" called her father. "Are you never coming?"

He began nervously to mount the stairs.

"Yes, papa, just taking off my hat."

"You ought not to have waited for any thing," he cried, excitedly. "Your Aunt Hopper had some purpose in coming to-night — any one could see it. I think she meant to do something handsome by you; but you've tried her shamefully. Come quick now. I shouldn't blame her a bit if she had changed her mind. Ah! why must I be so harassed?"

"O, dear, dear papa!" cried Christie, hurrying to join him, with a swelling heart. "She doesn't mean any thing. Don't think of it. I cannot bear to have you so disappointed."

"Well, child," said Aunt Hopper, as she entered the room, "I had about given you up. It is very late for me to be out after my illness; and I've sent Hannah for a hack. There! I hear the wheels this minute. Help me on with my cloak; where's my tippet? And O, here Christina, how would you like this bit of woollen for a dress? Your Uncle Hopper picked it out himself; he was a great beau when he was young and always had

great taste about what a lady should wear. He feels very kindly towards you Christina, which I am sure is very Christian, after all that has happened. Now what do you think of that ? ”

Christie looked in dismay at the bright staring plaid, which Aunt Hopper was complacently unrolling, and tried to stammer some thanks. It was about what she had expected. She turned away from the sick, blank look upon her poor father's face.

“ I thought you'd like it,” said the old lady, with a gratified smile. “ You can always trust your Uncle Hopper in a matter like that ; and his eyesight is grand for a man nigh on to eighty. Well, good-night, all. Come help me in, Christina ; hold my muff till I'm settled ; is that robe well tucked in ? ”

Christie obeyed all the directions with a heavy heart.

“ Christina,” said she, thrusting her head out of the window the last thing. “ Wait a minute. Don't be in such a fidget. Christina, you know you will never be a penny — ”

“ Yes, yes, Aunt Hopper,” cried Christie, feeling herself tried beyond endurance. “ I never forget it. Please don't say it again.”

"Well, don't take your old Aunt up quite so short. You did me a good turn once, Christina, and I'm not a person to forget, either. Maybe you think I didn't know who stayed by me that night, when I might have died for the want of a drop of water! Ah, I know very well! and I know, too, who went up into the blue room to creep into the best bed!" Aunt Hopper's voice splintered and broke with the sharpness of her indignation.

"And *you* thought it was the small-pox, eh?" there was a sudden change to something very like tenderness; "but you stayed by your old aunt just the same. You *do* love her a little then? And your Uncle Hopper, too, I'll be bound, since you are so very much changed?"

Christie could never be thankful enough that she didn't press the question.

"I've been thinking over matters lately," she ran on. "I won't deny that I'm sorry for saying some things in my haste. Your poor father, most probable, feels much the same way. I don't believe he much cares to remember the times he has flung in my face, that he'd 'never touch a cent of my money if he was starving!' Well, well, let by-gones be by

goned. It has hurt me to see him to-night, like a poor broken spirited dray-horse. But I can't break my word. I can't tell a lie; and I won't ask *him* to. I'll tell you how I have managed it. Shows I have a clear good mind yet," chuckled the old lady.

"Now I never said you wouldn't be a penny richer if I *lived*, did I? No, I didn't!" she cried, marching through her loop-hole, like a conqueror through the arch of triumph. "And Christina, take this," she thrust out a paper. "The Lord knows you all need it enough; but I give it to *you*, because you have earned it, and you may do what you like with it. But, — here's the rest of my plan, — if you choose to give it to your father, I won't say, no. He can take it from you without putting his soul in danger; and I'll make it up to you yet before I die."

Christie wondered, while she thanked her, whether it might be ten dollars or possibly twenty.

"You may think it strange, child, when I've always held things so close," quavered the old lady. "But when people have been so near letting every thing drop, as *I* have, — they can never shut their fingers quite so tight

again. But what have I been thinking of, keeping you here in the cold! Here child!" she drew her towards her, and gave her a shrivelled kiss. "There, run right in. Not another word. You've probably took an inflammation of the lungs already."

With which cheering suggestion, Aunt Hopper finally rolled away.

Christie came back to the room, where her father was still sitting, exactly as she had left him. Her heart reproached her that she had been so selfishly happy an hour before. How could she have forgotten him one moment! Life was a long battle, there was many a weary conflict before her yet.

"One thing is clear," she said to herself, "I must not think of accepting happiness for myself. I have no right to it yet; nor till I have helped to lift the weight that is crushing papa."

But how? since her dearest hope had failed. Could she teach the lower branches in the district school? Should she get a sewing machine?

"Christie," asked her father, "was that Grey son who came with you to the door?"

"Yes, did you want to see him?"

"No," said he miserably, "I can't look an honest man in the face. He might have asked for the money I owe him."

"O papa!" cried Christie, quickly, "I hope you don't owe Mr. Greyson."

"Why not?" said he sharply. "I had to keep some of the blood-hounds at bay, till my next quarter came in. And he is always so ready to stand in a gap. But I'll make it all right, if I have to end my days in the poor-house."

"Christie," said her mother, trying to change the subject, "what is that you have in your hand?"

Christie had been turning the great white envelope absently.

"O, yes, I had forgotten all about it," she said in a spiritless tone. "It is another of Aunt Hopper's valuable gifts. I think it must be more than the fifty cents she used to give me on Christmas, she made such a time over it."

She deliberately tore it open, while she was speaking. Her father never raised his head.

"Why, what is this?" she cried, opening a large crisp sheet. "I never saw any thing like

*this* before. What does it mean papa? What is it worth?"

Mr. Hammond came quickly enough now, taking it eagerly from her hands.

"Mean?" cried he excitedly, "Why it means that you are a very fortunate girl, Christie! Aunt Hopper has really opened her heart, at last. I couldn't have believed it! Why, Christie, this means that you are the happy possessor of ten thousand dollars in coupon bonds!"

Christie's quick mind jumped to a full comprehension of the situation.

"No, papa!" she cried, with a joyous laugh, "it means that I am the *daughter* of the happy possessor!" And she unfolded to him Aunt Hopper's deep-laid, ingenious plan of providing for his earthly happiness, without imperilling the Hereafter.

It was perfectly delicious to Christie to hear her father laughing again, and in such a light-hearted way.

"But it has all come through *you*, Christie," he said. "She told me so; she said you had 'earned all she had to give.' It doesn't seem quite right to take your fortune."

"But she meant you to have it papa, and she knew *my* fortune would be in the happiness of

giving it to you," she danced around him in her delight. "Now papa, you will pay off the mortgage; you will pay Mr. Greyson, and everybody. O, how very happy I am!"

"You are a good child, Christie," said her father, brokenly, "Yes, yes, we will pay every thing, and I shall be a free man again. I wonder how it will feel!"

He took a pencil from his pocket, and began making a hasty calculation.

"So much to Greyson. So much to Banks — a mere trifle to Uncle Winter," he ran on. "Yes, there will be two or three thousand left, after every thing is settled. That shall be Christie's."

He rose, straightening himself up. "Bring me my coat, dear. I am going out."

"Going out?" exclaimed Mrs. Hammond. "But your head—you surely are not well enough."

"I am *perfectly* well," he returned briskly, "and I shall sleep better to-night, if I make a little beginning. Look at me, I have grown ten years younger in the last half hour. Christie, this has saved your father's life!"

Was there ever such an intoxicating hour!

"Well, old Christie," she said joyfully to

herself, "if *you* couldn't earn it, you see 'John' could."

And she ran after her father, to slip her hand in his and whisper —

"Papa, don't you think God is *forgiving* my voice?"

It was the very happiest household in Millburgh, that night, with the exception of one single member. Little Dump going up to bed at an hour unusually late, bethought herself to look in upon John-Jack, in her motherly way. She found him crouched in a corner of the room, looking pale and frightened.

"What is it, Jacky?" she said, patting his face with her plump little hand,

"Jack is a terrible little fellow!" he said in a tone of awe.

"What has he done?" asked Dump.

"He asked John to pray for something, and John played a trick on him; and —"

"And what?"

Jack looked all around him, uneasily.

"I don't want any one to hear!"

Dump put her head close to his lips—

"And Jack *swore* at him!"

"Oh!" cried little Dump, shocked beyond further expression.

"And John hasn't spoken a word since," said Jack, solemnly. "Think I've killed him!"

"O, no, I'm *sure* you haven't," said kind Dump, her sympathy reviving with the large demand of Jack's wretchedness.

"Then he has run away, and I don't blame him. He is tired of Jack: he doesn't want Jack. *Nobody* wants Jack!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### JOHN-JACK'S LAST CONFLICT.



THE day Mr. Greyson went away from Millburgh, there was a sudden change in the weather ; the air grew heavy and oppressive, the keen, life-giving sharpness all gone ; the clouds settled lower and lower, and finally broke into great sheets of monotonous, persistent rain. All day, all night, and the next day, and the next ; it was only upon the afternoon of the third day that the clouds lifted a little, in short respite.

Christie was sitting by the window, the basket of mending before her, and John-Jack by her side, executing some of his marvellous embroidery upon a pair of Dump's stockings.

Jack's face was full of peace, for after very sore repentance, John had been pleased to forgive him, and come back again. They were very happy after the reconciliation. From time

to time Jack broke forth, in his sweet, pure tenor, singing something that had lately been a great favorite with him.

“Nearer my God to thee,  
Nearer to thee,  
E'en though it be a cross,  
That raiseth me.”

Christie used to sing it; she had often sung it at church, looking around the while to see which of the girls had new ear-rings, and which had the most stylish way of arranging her back hair. But, lately, since she had begun to realize every thing, — since she thought she knew what it meant, — she had hesitated. Surely she wished to be nearer God, but when it came to being lifted in *such* a way — ! O, these solemn crosses of the Legion of Honor! Whether she were to be stretched upon them, or to carry them, she did not feel strong enough to ask for them. She looked at Jack as he sang —

“*Still* all my song shall be,  
Nearer my God to thee,  
Nearer to thee.”

He seemed to understand it. Jack had changed very much during the past two years; his vacant, strange expression had given place to a

childlike, touching refinement; and now she could not help noticing how this grandest aspiration seemed to touch every feature with something indescribably fine and noble.

But she wished on that day especially, that Jack had chosen something else to sing. It gave her a vague uneasiness. She did not want to think of such things now; she was going to be so very happy.

"Come, Jacky," said she, starting up suddenly, and throwing down her work, "it hasn't rained for an hour, and I'm just dying for a breath of fresh air. Let's take a walk."

Jack joyfully assented; and soon, in waterproof and rubbers, Christie started out, adding a very pretty bit of color to the sodden landscape, with the bright knot of ribbon at her throat, and the brighter scarlet in her cheeks.

This was the *third* day, she thought. Allan Greyson would be home by night, and papa had the money all ready to give him. So much for the satisfaction of honest, honorable pride. And *then*!—

"I suppose you are going to see the freshet, Miss Christie," broke in a passing neighbor. "Most unheard of at this time of year. The

little mill stream has grown to quite a river, and there will be a good deal of damage done if it rises much higher. By the way, part of the Berlin and Millburgh railway has been undermined. No trains in to-day."

Christie's face fell. Then there was no hope of seeing him till to-morrow. She walked on greatly disappointed.

"O, look ! look Cousin !" cried John-Jack, excitedly, as they came in sight of the turbid, troubled water.

Christie could not repress an exclamation. The little harmless stream was swollen to twice its usual size, and filled with lumber and tossing débris. She had never seen it so angry before.

"And look Jack !" she cried, pointing to the little opposite village of Clapptown, just above the mills. "See, the water is almost up to the flooring of Clapptown bridge—the piers are quite hidden. Let us go up a little nearer."

"Why, how this damp air makes you cough Jacky," she said kindly, as they went on. "It is strange that it hangs on so, and you such a great, strong fellow !" she patted his broad shoulders. "We will make a fine batch of molasses candy for it, just as soon as we get home."

Jack looked greatly pleased.

But now they were nearly up to the bridge.

"See that!" cried a man, as a heavy log came grinding against it. "It can't stand much of that, it will be gone before morning."

They came opposite the village and stood a long time in silence. It was very fascinating to watch the wild, plunging water.

"Cousin!" cried John-Jack, abruptly pulling her sleeve, "do you know it is beginning to rain?"

"Wait a minute, Jack," she said, peering eagerly through the mist. She had caught sight of some one on the opposite side, riding hastily down to the bridge. Could it be? Yes, she had been stupid not to think of it before. He had said he would be home that night, and he always did what he said. He had that strong *will*, so sure of the *way*, that the two might be said to stand in the relation of cause and effect. He had now taken a horse, and come around by the way of Clapptown, when the ordinary means of reaching home had failed him.

"Jack," cried Christie, "do you see him? Almost home. Isn't that splendid?"

Jack did not answer; but he had seen him

long before, when Christie had not distinguished him from the trees at the top of the dim village street.

"When he is safe over, Jack," she cried, "we will hurry home; and you will make a nice fire in the parlor grate; and we'll have coffee and cakes for tea, for we'll all be so cold and wet. And we will shut out all this dull, dismal night, and sit around the bright fire, and be so happy — *so* happy, Jack!"

Jack had turned around, staring straight before him.

"I think I'll go now, and make the fire, cousin," said he, going slowly away.

Christie did not hear him. Somebody was coming nearer; he had recognized her — he was waving his hat.

In the meantime a great peril was sweeping down upon the bridge. An old barn, upon the water's edge, had been undermined, and now in huge fragments came plunging down the angry waters.

Christie caught sight of it just as Allan Greyson was spurring his horse on to the tottering planks. He too, saw the danger, but it was such a little space to cross.

"The bridge's life is short," he thought, "but

long enough to earn praise for carrying me over." And he sprang sharply forward.

Christie watched him breathlessly. How the dark mass hurried on! It was frightful. Her mind worked very fast. What was that Mr. Anthon had said? "Only this little life to suffer!"—How little he knew. O, it would be boundless and endless *if*—she would not put the terror into words.

He had already reached the centre—now he was a little beyond—now almost over. Only one minute more! But the current was very swift.

"It is coming!" she shrieked.

There was a horrible crushing, grinding sound, —it was all over in shorter space than it would take to tell it, and Christie stood looking with dilated, incredulous eyes. In place of the little bridge—the horse and rider so full of life, were a few tossing sticks, a floating cap, and a horse's head, struggling down the stream.

"He's got free from the hoss, mum," said one of the mill-hands, who had been standing near. "He'll strike out, when he comes up. Never fear. He's a powerful swimmer, and he hasn't far to go."

Christie watched with straining eyes.

"There he comes, now. Why, what ails the

fellow ! Going down again ! Something must have struck his head."

"Get him ! Get him, this minute !" cried Christie, stamping her foot imperatively.

"Can't swim a stroke, mum," said the man, pityingly. "Besides, I guess it's all up with the poor fellow."

Christie went blindly towards the water. At the same moment some one caught her, flung her back upon the ground almost rudely, and a tall, gaunt figure rushed by, muttering as it went.

"Hush, John ! You needn't say one word. Jack will do it himself. John !"

---

It was late in the evening, and Christie was lying on the sofa in the parlor, all alone.

Her mother came in softly.

"Do you feel able to go up stairs, dear ?"

She was up in an instant. "O, may I ? may I thank him now ? I didn't know how to wait, but you thought he had not better have any more excitement to-night."

"I do not believe it will hurt him. At least—I think you had better come."

Christie understood her. "Now mother !" she cried reproachfully. "Why will you always look

on the dark side? Didn't the doctor just say the danger was all over? Has he been bleeding again?"

And in her usual fashion, without waiting for an answer, she hastened up the stairs.

Very white and still Jack lay upon his bed, and did not seem to notice her light tread as she entered the room.

"I should like to have on my pretty bow, Dump," he was saying, without opening his eyes.

"O, no, I wouldn't," remonstrated motherly little Dump. "You know we save that for dress-up, and Jack isn't going anywhere to-night."

"But I would like it," persisted Jack, looking troubled.

"Then you shall," said Dump, soothingly, "You shall do just as you please, and have every thing you want, because you've been a brave, splendid Jack. There!" she arranged the bow, with a great many careful little pats, "It is all right now, and looks very nice."

Jack smiled, with a sigh of satisfaction; and seemed to be dropping off in a quiet little doze, when suddenly he roused again.

"None of that John!" he cried in a shrill tone of anxiety. "Be fair, John."

"Think John is slipping away," he explained

to Dump, as she wiped the drops off his forehead.

"Do you suppose he would stay if I read his chapter to him?" suggested Dump, after a moment of profound thought.

"Maybe he *would*," said Jack, in a tone of relief.

Dump took the little red book, and began at that part of the chapter which was supposed to especially belong to John.

"'And as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the high-way-side begging.'"

Jack grew very peaceful; and Christie, still standing in the shadow, behind Jack's head, smiled to herself.

"He will go to sleep now," she thought, "and it will do him so much good."

But no; as Dump read on, he became interested, as usual, and began to interpose the same old words at the same old places. It was very familiar ground to them both.

"'And many charged him that he should hold his peace.'"

"Don't you do it, John."

"But he cried the more a great deal—'"

"That's right!"

"'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.'"

"That's a good cry, John. He'll hear that."

"'And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.'"

"Eh, John? Didn't I tell you? I knew he would call *you*. And I'm glad John—give you my word, John, I'm *glad*!"

Poor, patient, noble Jack! Christie could wait no longer. She flung herself down by his side, taking both the large, helpless hands in hers.

Jack quickly opened his eyes. "What, cousin?" he cried uneasily, trying to draw them away. "Get my gloves, Dump, quick. They'll make her sick. Wait a minute, cousin," he cried in eager apology, "I'll have 'em on in a minute. Didn't know you were coming. Ugly hands — ugly hands!"

"O, Jack, was that it?" cried Christie sobbing passionately. "Beautiful white hands—white and clean as silver!" She bent her head low over them, covering them with kisses.

A faint flush stole up in Jack's face. "Maybe you know Jack did it, cousin?" he asked timidly. "John didn't have to say a word. Jack thought of it first—Jack did it all himself; and—Jack *wanted* to do it."

"Jack is splendid!" cried Christie. "I never can do enough for him, I am going to thank him every day of my life."

But Jack had turned his face to his beautiful, solemn picture—

"This have I done for thee.  
What hast thou done for Me?"

His eyes slowly followed the lines. "Jack did it. *Jack* did it," he repeated softly.

He was very quiet now. Mrs. Hammond, standing in the door, beckoned to them. Christie and little Dump rose cautiously.

"There! there!" cried Jack, throwing up his hands, in new alarm. "There he goes again! Slipping away—Read to him, quick!"

"Just a minute, dear," nodded Mrs. Hammond, in answer to the child's pleading look.

Little Dump tiptoed back.

"Stay, John," she said severely, "and hear the rest of your chapter."

"'And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called,'" she began.

At the first words, Jack closed his eyes with returning peace. He was very tired. "Eh, John!" he murmured slowly, sleepily.

Dump paused; but he frowned a little, and his feeble hands fluttered.

"‘And they call the blind man,’" she continued, "'saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.'"

Jack turned his head quickly.

"What!" he cried imperatively, with almost a fierce eagerness. "*Again!* What?"

Dump gave a little wandering glance at her old comrade, and read again, in her labored way.

"‘Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.’"

Jack sat right up in bed, his eyes dilated — beautiful with a look they did not understand. It was sweet, bewildered surprise — it was ecstasy — it was rapture ineffable!

He stretched out his arms. "What John!" he cried, with a quick, sobbing breath, "not both of us! You don't mean to say that it's *both* of us!"

He fell back. There was a bright scarlet stain on the pillow.

"Jack, dear, *dear* Jack!" wept Christie, kissing him now on forehead and lips. "Don't go; I couldn't live without you, Jacky!"

Somebody stood in the door, very pale, with a handkerchief bound tightly about his head.

"I have come to thank Jack," he said. "Would it trouble him, do you think?"

It might possibly have troubled poor strug

gling Jack, a moment before ; but not now, O, no ! not *now*. Christie, "looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." For Jack had received his sight,— he had seen Jesus standing on the right hand of God ; and — O, joy unutterable ! — the white, beautiful angel had said : —

" ' Rise ; he calleth thee. ' "

So the eager heart should hunger no more, neither thirst any more. Some one, at last, had *wanted* poor Jack, and he was of very "good comfort" forevermore.







